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Minister Clodius was asked to participate in the last part of the conversation on account of the economic questions. He characterized the Rumanian request for gold as too high; for the rest he expressed willingness to study the question of the tractors and the reduction in troops.

In conclusion the Foreign Minister expressed his pleasure at the personal acquaintance with Antonescu, and called Germany and Rumania the corner stones in the perpetually open struggle against the influence of Soviet Russia.

SCHMIDT

No. 514

F2/0098-100; 102  
F15/082-102

*Memorandum by an Official of the Foreign Minister's Secretariat*

NOVEMBER 28, 1941.

RECORD OF THE CONVERSATION OF THE GRAND MUFTI WITH THE FOREIGN  
MINISTER IN BERLIN ON NOVEMBER 28, 1941

After introductory words of thanks for being received by the Foreign Minister and for the sympathies tendered by the German Government to the Arab peoples in general and Palestine in particular, the Grand Mufti stressed the fact that the Arabs were naturally friends of Germany because both were fighting three common foes: the English, the Jews, and Bolshevism. It had been a great deed on the part of Germany to have proceeded against these three enemies. The Arabs hoped that Germany would also help them in their own fight on these three fronts. They thought that victory in this battle was important not only for the Axis, but also for their own people.

They were prepared to do everything, and it had, indeed, been understood in Germany that the cooperation of the Arabs in Palestine, in Iraq, and in Syria had been contributions to the common cause. The insurrection in Iraq had not gone off very felicitously, but the Arab world took the stand that this was not an end but only a beginning. At least the Iraqis had now understood that England was their foe.

It was their desire, however, not only to render negative assistance, through insurrection and sabotage, but also to mobilize positive forces. Consideration was being given to an Arab Legion that might consist of Arabs from Er Rif and captured Algerians, Tunisians, and Moroccans. Also the Arab community of Palestine was on the best of terms with the centers of the Moslem faith and it was hoped that this would influence the Indians. It was also hoped that there would be opportunity to obtain recruits among the Indian prisoners and to care for them.

As is well known . . .<sup>1</sup>

. . . history, so often had to suffer from disunity.

It was natural that the Arabs should attach great importance to collaboration with Germany, both now and later, and in this connection cultural and economic ties were also being considered. They would like to conclude an agreement with the Axis Powers and desired, first of all, to have a declaration in order that the people might understand the attitude of the Axis Powers; for, as it was, the English were, unfortunately, planting doubts, while they themselves had already issued various, though rather unimportant, declarations. Unfortunately, as a result of the activity of the English there had already been some defections among the Arab followers. A declaration would strengthen the movement, without however causing the people to rise prematurely.

Nor did he, the Mufti, think that such a declaration would antagonize the Turks, for the Turks preferred to see weak neighbors on Palestine's borders rather than a strong power; under the mandate system, this meant France. The French, for their part, had as early as 1933 contemplated a union of Syria and Iraq [*eine Einheit Syrien-Irak vorgesehen*] and later on in 1936 even the independence of Syria.<sup>2</sup>

In summary, the Mufti once more referred to the importance of the declaration and particularly to the fact that it must be issued without delay. He then expressed his thanks for the support that had been given by the Axis powers to Rashid Ali's venture.

The Foreign Minister observed that this venture had been premature and that in German political life something important had been learned from the English, namely, "timing."<sup>3</sup>

After the Mufti had again asked that the declaration be not too long delayed, the Foreign Minister said that he was very glad to see the Mufti. Even when he was a child, his imagination had often been engaged by the concept and person of the Mufti, and in past years, it was his activities that he had closely observed, because he had now become a sort of mystic figure. As a nationalist he felt much sympathy for such an undaunted champion of his people, who had also never abandoned the struggle.

He wished to emphasize what the Mufti had said about the three common foes of the Arabs and the German people. Russia was now as good as beaten and the political power of Bolshevism was almost

<sup>1</sup> Page 3 of the original is missing.

<sup>2</sup> Apparently a reference to the Franco-Syrian treaty, signed Dec. 22, 1936, which was never ratified by the French Chamber of Deputies. For the text, see Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, *Rapport à la Société des Nations sur la situation de la Syrie et du Liban, 1936* (Paris, 1937), pp. 201-228.

<sup>3</sup> In English in the original.

broken. The Führer was determined never to let this danger spot become active again. As a sworn enemy of the Jews, Germany understood the troubles of the Arabs in this field, and finally the war against England was another bond uniting the Axis and the Arabs.

As far as Iraq was concerned, the Foreign Minister was afraid that they had begun too early there. Nor had Germany been in a position to contribute anything there. The sea was controlled by the English fleet. Air operations were impossible because they were beyond the range of the fighter planes, and with regard to land, everything had, to be sure, been attempted with Turkey; but these attempts had failed because of Turkey's refusal. Herr von Papen had, to be sure, been promised that the transit of material would be permitted but, apparently under English pressure, the Turks finally refused permission.<sup>4</sup>

At this point the Mufti stressed the fact that the English had a secret treaty with the Turks which had especially as its subject certain postwar plans.

The Foreign Minister then asked whether the declaration addressed by the Axis Powers to Iraq in the early summer<sup>5</sup> had caused Gaylani to strike. This was denied by the Mufti, who added that the Iraqis had no obligation but that of defense. The Foreign Minister's question as to whether the defense had been directed against the dangerously numerous landings of English troops was answered in the affirmative by the Mufti, who added that the plan to use Iraq as a base originated with Wavell<sup>6</sup> and was formulated in 1940, when Weygand was still chief of the Army of the Levant.

The Foreign Minister then stated that upon the outbreak of the war, when Minister Grobba was sent to the Near East, the Führer had been very much occupied with the problem, but it had been impossible for him to do anything. He himself, the Foreign Minister, has asked the Führer in Berchtesgaden, after the occupation of Crete, whether it would be possible to make a greater effort there, and the Führer had that very same day consulted the Reichsmarschall as leader of the Crete operation about it. The reply had been negative because a Syrian operation was impossible due to the insufficient range of fighter planes for this long distance. If it had been possible at the time to send a dozen trains through Turkey; if the necessary material as well as a mixed battalion with the necessary tanks had been placed

<sup>4</sup> See vol. XII of this series, document No. 556.

<sup>5</sup> "Frühsummer" in the original is apparently an error. The reference seems to be to the German-Italian declaration addressed to the Iraq Government in April 1941, the text of which is printed in vol. XII of this series, document No. 322.

<sup>6</sup> Gen. Sir Archibald Wavell, British Commander-in-Chief, Middle East, February 1940-June 1941.

in readiness; it would certainly have been possible to chase the English out of Iraq. In the case of the Syrian operation, Germany had, to be sure, gotten the French to shoot, but, for lack of gasoline and, above all, of facilities for transportation, exactly the same difficulties had arisen with regard to supplies.

It was clear that it was now necessary to proceed very cautiously and prudently. One thing, though, he, the Foreign Minister, could say to the Mufti: his cause would receive support. How this was to be done, however, was still a matter for careful consideration. There was one thing he wanted to point out: the Germans were not Englishmen and the Führer didn't care for humbug. Thus, if an announcement were made, it had to be backed up by the power to carry it out.

A declaration naturally had to be made at the proper time, but the Foreign Minister wondered whether the time for this had already come, or whether it would not be better to wait until the guns did the talking there. The Führer thought that the latter moment would be better. To make empty promises was the English way: The Führer did not wish a declaration to be followed by inaction. He feared that the Arabs would in that case only lose confidence, and he thought that the declaration had better be made at a time when we were ready to strike and expel the English from the Suez Canal.

After the Foreign Minister had once more summed up the arguments with regard to the timing of the declaration, he pointed out that events in the south of Russia would proceed much more rapidly, particularly, once the Black Sea had become a German base of operations, which was to be expected in the near future. When we had advanced to the areas of the Near East, that would be the right moment for the declaration.

The Mufti stated that the Iraq venture was not regretted, and it was very well known that Germany would have liked to help. It seemed to him that the statement was necessary at the present time and especially important, for the reason that the English were recruiting volunteers with their promises, and that there was danger that many of the supporters of the Arab idea would defect.

Here the Foreign Minister interrupted to ask whether the Arabs, after all the trouble they had had with the Jews and after all that the English had done to them, still put faith in what the English said.

The Mufti stated that this was, to be sure, no longer the case in Palestine, but that in other Arab areas, people still thought differently. He considered it important for the declaration to be issued immediately in order that popular support might be retained and confidence bolstered. He wished to prepare the Arabs by such a declara-

tion for a later operation, so that they would not again be taken by surprise, as was the case with the Iraq venture.

The Foreign Minister raised the question of the consequences that the immediate issuance of a declaration would have. For the time being nothing positive could really be done, and there was danger, therefore, that the friends of the Mufti might get the impression that it was again merely a case of an idle promise. Also, and this was very important, the elements that were now engaged in secret activities might possibly become careless and thereby appear suspect to the English.

The Mufti contradicted this view and stated that the declaration would only bolster the hope of the adherents. He personally would hold them together and he could assure us that nothing would happen except by his command. In reply to a question from the Foreign Minister as to what Turkey's position would be in this matter, the Mufti said that the Turks would be glad to see an Arabic Greater Syria as such. They were only afraid to have a European great power as a neighbor, while they could not be unsympathetic to the idea of a rather small Arab state. He himself had been an officer in the Turkish Army during the entire World War and had always gotten along well with the Turks. It was, after all, not a case of the unification of all Arab countries, but only the union of Syria and Iraq. When the Foreign Minister indicated that, with respect to Syria, it was necessary to think also of France, the Grand Mufti remarked that the French had in theory already agreed to such a union in the past, under Briand.<sup>7</sup>

The Foreign Minister expressed the fear that only harm could come from premature revelation of the matter, particularly since it was not a question of years, but could only be a matter of months before intervention in the Near East was possible. Experience had shown that once a movement suffered reverses, it could be paralyzed for a long time to come. This was doubly dangerous because presumably the people who would have been most important upon the arrival of the German forces would then be at the mercy of the English.

The Mufti stated that he had no misgivings on this score. His organization was absolutely steadfast and he would speak on the radio, commenting on the declaration. He could assume responsibility for his followers. The leaders of his movement were, to be sure, entirely steadfast, but the people needed a psychological boost.

In conclusion, the Foreign Minister asked the Mufti to present these ideas in detail also in his forthcoming conversation with the Führer.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Aristide Briand (1862-1932), served frequently as French Minister of Foreign Affairs and as President of the Council of Ministers.

<sup>8</sup> See document No. 515.

and he assured the Mufti, who asked the Foreign Minister to intercede with the Führer in the matter of the declaration, of his warmest sympathies for the Arab people.

VON LOESCH

No. 515

F1/0018-24

*Memorandum by an Official of the Foreign Minister's Secretariat*

Füh. 57a. g Rs.

BERLIN, November 30, 1941.

RECORD OF THE CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE FÜHRER AND THE GRAND MUFTI OF JERUSALEM ON NOVEMBER 28, 1941, IN THE PRESENCE OF REICH FOREIGN MINISTER AND MINISTER GROBBA IN BERLIN

The Grand Mufti began by thanking the Führer for the great honor he had bestowed by receiving him. He wished to seize the opportunity to convey to the Führer of the Greater German Reich, admired by the entire Arab world, his thanks for the sympathy which he had always shown for the Arab and especially the Palestinian cause, and to which he had given clear expression in his public speeches. The Arab countries were firmly convinced that Germany would win the war and that the Arab cause would then prosper. The Arabs were Germany's natural friends because they had the same enemies as had Germany, namely the English, the Jews, and the Communists. They were therefore prepared to cooperate with Germany with all their hearts and stood ready to participate in the war, not only negatively by the commission of acts of sabotage and the instigation of revolutions, but also positively by the formation of an Arab Legion. The Arabs could be more useful to Germany as allies than might be apparent at first glance, both for geographical reasons and because of the suffering inflicted upon them by the English and the Jews. Furthermore, they had close relations with all Moslem nations, of which they could make use in behalf of the common cause. The Arab Legion would be quite easy to raise. An appeal by the Mufti to the Arab countries and the prisoners of Arab, Algerian, Tunisian, and Moroccan nationality in Germany would produce a great number of volunteers eager to fight. Of Germany's victory the Arab world was firmly convinced, not only because the Reich possessed a large army, brave soldiers, and military leaders of genius, but also because the Almighty could never award the victory to an unjust cause.

In this struggle, the Arabs were striving for the independence and unity of Palestine, Syria, and Iraq. They had the fullest confidence



in the Führer and looked to his hand for the balm on their wounds which had been inflicted upon them by the enemies of Germany.

The Mufti then mentioned the letter he had received from Germany, which stated that Germany was holding no Arab territories and understood and recognized the aspirations to independence and freedom of the Arabs, just as she supported the elimination of the Jewish national home.<sup>1</sup>

A public declaration in this sense would be very useful for its propagandistic effect on the Arab peoples at this moment. It would rouse the Arabs from their momentary lethargy and give them new courage. It would also ease the Mufti's work of secretly organizing the Arabs against the moment when they could strike. At the same time, he could give the assurance that the Arabs would in strict discipline patiently wait for the right moment and only strike upon an order from Berlin.

With regard to the events in Iraq, the Mufti observed that the Arabs in that country certainly had by no means been incited by Germany to attack England, but solely had acted in reaction to a direct English assault upon their honor.

The Turks, he believed, would welcome the establishment of an Arab government in the neighboring territories because they would prefer weaker Arab to strong European governments in the neighboring countries, and, being themselves a nation of 7 millions,<sup>2</sup> they had moreover nothing to fear from the 1,700,000 Arabs inhabiting Syria, Transjordan, Iraq, and Palestine.

France likewise would have no objections to the unification plan because she had conceded independence to Syria as early as 1936 and had given her approval to the unification of Iraq and Syria under King Faisal as early as 1933.

In these circumstances he was renewing his request that the Führer make a public declaration so that the Arabs would not lose hope, which is so powerful a force in the life of nations. With such hope in their hearts the Arabs, as he had said, were willing to wait. They were not pressing for immediate realization of their aspirations; they could easily wait half a year or a whole year. But if they were not inspired with such a hope by a declaration of this sort, it could be expected that the English would be the gainers from it.

The Führer replied that Germany's fundamental attitude on these questions, as the Mufti himself had already stated, was clear. Germany stood for uncompromising war against the Jews. That naturally included active opposition to the Jewish national home in Palestine,

<sup>1</sup> Apparently a reference to the letter of Apr. 8, 1941, printed in vol. XII of this series, document No. 293.

<sup>2</sup> Thus in the original. It should read 17 millions.

which was nothing other than a center, in the form of a state, for the exercise of destructive influence by Jewish interests. Germany was also aware that the assertion that the Jews were carrying out the function of economic pioneers in Palestine was a lie. The work there was done only by the Arabs, not by the Jews. Germany was resolved, step by step, to ask one European nation after the other to solve its Jewish problem, and at the proper time direct a similar appeal to non-European nations as well.

Germany was at the present time engaged in a life and death struggle with two citadels of Jewish power: Great Britain and Soviet Russia. Theoretically there was a difference between England's capitalism and Soviet Russia's communism; actually, however, the Jews in both countries were pursuing a common goal. This was the decisive struggle; on the political plane, it presented itself in the main as a conflict between Germany and England, but ideologically it was a battle between National Socialism and the Jews. It went without saying that Germany would furnish positive and practical aid to the Arabs involved in the same struggle, because platonic promises were useless in a war for survival or destruction in which the Jews were able to mobilize all of England's power for their ends.

The aid to the Arabs would have to be material aid. Of how little help sympathies alone were in such a battle had been demonstrated plainly by the operation in Iraq, where circumstances had not permitted the rendering of really effective, practical aid. In spite of all the sympathies, German aid had not been sufficient and Iraq was overcome by the power of Britain, that is, the guardian of the Jews.

The Mufti could not but be aware, however, that the outcome of the struggle going on at present would also decide the fate of the Arab world. The Führer therefore had to think and speak coolly and deliberately, as a rational man and primarily as a soldier, as the leader of the German and allied armies. Everything of a nature to help in this titanic battle for the common cause, and thus also for the Arabs, would have to be done. Anything, however, that might contribute to weakening the military situation must be put aside, no matter how unpopular this move might be.

Germany was now engaged in very severe battles to force the gateway to the northern Caucasus region. The difficulties were mainly with regard to maintaining the supply, which was most difficult as a result of the destruction of railroads and highways as well as of the oncoming winter. If at such a moment, the Führer were to raise the problem of Syria in a declaration, those elements in France which were under de Gaulle's influence would receive new strength. They would interpret the Führer's declaration as an intention to break up France's colonial empire and appeal to their fellow countrymen that

they should rather make common cause with the English to try to save what still could be saved. A German declaration regarding Syria would in France be understood to refer to the French colonies in general, and that would at the present time create new troubles in western Europe, which means that a portion of the German armed forces would be immobilized in the west and no longer be available for the campaign in the east.

The Führer then made the following statement to the Mufti, enjoining him to lock it in the uttermost depths of his heart:

1. He (the Führer) would carry on the battle to the total destruction of the Judeo-Communist empire in Europe.

2. At some moment which was impossible to set exactly today but which in any event was not distant, the German armies would in the course of this struggle reach the southern exit from Caucasia.

3. As soon as this had happened, the Führer would on his own give the Arab world the assurance that its hour of liberation had arrived. Germany's objective would then be solely the destruction of the Jewish element residing in the Arab sphere under the protection of British power. In that hour the Mufti would be the most authoritative spokesman for the Arab world. It would then be his task to set off the Arab operations which he had secretly prepared. When that time had come, Germany could also be indifferent to French reaction to such a declaration.

Once Germany had forced open the road to Iran and Iraq through Rostov, it would be also the beginning of the end of the British world empire. He (the Führer) hoped that the coming year would make it possible for Germany to thrust open the Caucasian gate to the Middle East. For the good of their common cause, it would be better if the Arab proclamation were put off for a few more months than if Germany were to create difficulties for herself without being able thereby to help the Arabs.

He (the Führer) fully appreciated the eagerness of the Arabs for a public declaration of the sort requested by the Grand Mufti. But he would beg him to consider that he (the Führer) himself was the Chief of State of the German Reich for 5 long years during which he was unable to make to his own homeland the announcement of its liberation. He had to wait with that until the announcement could be made on the basis of a situation brought about by the force of arms that the Anschluss had been carried out.

The moment that Germany's tank divisions and air squadrons had made their appearance south of the Caucasus, the public appeal requested by the Grand Mufti could go out to the Arab world.

The Grand Mufti replied that it was his view that everything would come to pass just as the Führer had indicated. He was fully reassured and satisfied by the words which he had heard from the Chief of the German State. He asked, however, whether it would not be

possible, secretly at least, to enter into an agreement with Germany of the kind he had just outlined for the Führer.

The Führer replied that he had just now given the Grand Mufti precisely that confidential declaration.

The Grand Mufti thanked him for it and stated in conclusion that he was taking his leave from the Führer in full confidence and with reiterated thanks for the interest shown in the Arab cause.

SCHMIDT

## No. 516

71/50970

### *Memorandum by the Director of the Political Department*

BERLIN, November 28, 1941.

Minister von Rintelen informed me by telephone that after the reception of the Grand Mufti by the Führer,<sup>1</sup> the following decision was reached:

1) The issuance of a declaration concerning a free Arabia is to be postponed;

2) Minister Grobba is to inquire of the Grand Mufti whether he agrees to a press announcement which would approximately say that the Führer had received the Grand Mufti and had had a conversation with him that was significant for the future of the Arab people;

3) After the Grand Mufti gives his consent, before such a statement is issued, however, an inquiry should first be made in Rome. Since, so far as is known here, nothing has been published concerning the reception of the Grand Mufti by the Duce,<sup>2</sup> the suggestion should be made to the Italians that first of all a communiqué be issued stating that the Duce had some time ago had a conversation with him; this is to be followed after a while by a corresponding announcement regarding the conversation of the Führer with the Grand Mufti;<sup>3</sup>

4) After Rome has been contacted, the Foreign Minister desires that first of all the matter be again submitted to him.

WOERMANN

<sup>1</sup> See document No. 515.

<sup>2</sup> See document No. 428.

<sup>3</sup> In telegram No. 3244 of Nov. 29 (2281/482692-93) Woermann instructed the Embassy in Rome along these lines.

In telegram No. 3154 of Dec. 3 (2281/482694-95) Mackensen reported the agreement of the Italian Government to the proposal and forwarded an Italian draft communiqué regarding Mussolini's reception of the Grand Mufti.

Woermann's telegram No. 3293 of Dec. 4 (2281/482697) informed Mackensen of the Grand Mufti's approval of the proposed German and Italian communiqués.

On Dec. 6 in telegram No. 3184 (2281/482698), Mackensen notified the Foreign Ministry that the Italian communiqué would be published the next day.