

THE POLITICAL LIFE OF RAŠĪD RIḌĀ

Eliezer Tauber

Bar-Ilan University, Ramat-Gan

The Muslim thinker Muḥammad Rašīd Riḏā is better known to students of Islam and the Middle East in the modern age as the loyal disciple and follower of Muḥammad ʿAbduh, the founder of the Islamic reform movement. However, a thorough research on the activities of this man from the Young Turk revolution in 1908 until the destruction of Fayṣal's kingdom in Syria in 1920, reveals that alongside his overt activity to promote ʿAbduh's perceptions Riḏā also conducted a covert activity to foster the pan-Arab idea. This duality put Riḏā in difficult dilemmas, as it was not simple to harmonize activity for a religion with activity for a nationalist idea, especially when Islam was concerned, a religion which in principle had not recognized division between men on the basis of ethnic origin. However, Riḏā's own life story, and the circumstances which passed over the Arab world during these years, brought him to pursue this path and to become the first Muslim pan-Arabist in modern times.

Following the Young Turk revolution in 1908 Riḏā returned to Syria from his exile in Egypt and opened a propaganda campaign in favour of unity between Arabs and Turks in the Ottoman Empire. He was convinced of the rosy future expected for the Ottoman Empire and for Arab-Turkish relations in the post revolution era. In 1909 he travelled to Istanbul having two aims: to establish a school for Islamic propagandists and to ameliorate Arab-Turkish relations which started then to deteriorate due to the beginnings of the Turkification policy (a mere "misunderstanding" he called it then). Riḏā failed in both goals. In 1910, after a year in Istanbul, he reached the conclusion that the Young Turks were just mocking him. Filled with bitterness and disappointment he returned to Egypt. Riḏā never forgave the Young Turks, and the "Committee of Union and Progress" which headed them, and no longer had faith in the Ottoman Empire¹.

Since his return from Istanbul, Riḏā's work had split into two levels, one open and one secret. His open activity focused upon the school for propagandists, "the House of Propaganda and Guidance" (*Dār ad-daʿwa wa-l-iršād*), which he had managed to establish in Cairo instead of Istanbul. The secret one, which was the result of his disappointment of the Turks and the hatred he had developed towards the

¹ The Public Record Office (Kew-London), Foreign Office Records (hereafter: FO) 371/1011: despatches 466 and 717, Gerard Lowther (Istanbul) to Grey, 6 July and 9 October 1910. *al-Manār*, many articles in vols. 12-14, 1910-11, and 19, 1916. Arslan 1937: 148. aš-Šarbasī 1970: 145-147, 149-150. Adams 1968: 197.

Committee of Union and Progress, was expressed in the establishment of the clandestine "Society of the Arab Association" (*Ġam'iyat al-ġāmi'a al-'arabiyya*).

The society's original aims were: to unify the *amīrs* of the Arabian Peninsula and to prevent dissension among them; to achieve cooperation among the Arabs for the development of their countries and their protection; and to establish connections between the Arab political societies in Syria, Iraq and Istanbul in a joint struggle against the Committee of Union and Progress. Yet later Riḍā defined the purpose of the society as aiming to create a union between the Arabian Peninsula and the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire. And in an oath he composed for the *amīrs* and leaders who would join his society, Riḍā already went a step forward and spoke about "the founding of a new kingdom" for the Arabs².

In accordance with the aims of his society, Riḍā corresponded with Ibn Sa'ūd of Nağd on the necessity to reach an alliance between all the rulers of the Arabian Peninsula in order to strengthen the Arabs, and he sent a messenger to Imām Yaḥyā of Yemen and to as-Sayyid al-Idrīsī of 'Asīr. The latter two agreed in principle with the aims of the society though Yaḥyā pointed out that he could not come to an agreement with al-Idrīsī since he had once made a treaty with him and the latter had betrayed him with the Italians. Ibn Sa'ūd asked Riḍā to send him a messenger to explain his plan from the religious and political viewpoints so that he could persuade his followers. Riḍā indeed sent him a messenger with a case full of religious books, but World War I intervened, the messenger could not reach Ibn Sa'ūd, and the books were confiscated in Bombay. The war also prevented the continuation of contacts with Yaḥyā and al-Idrīsī. In 1912 Riḍā had gone to India on a lecture tour and on his way back to Egypt he passed through Kuwait and Masqat and made contacts with Mubārak aṣ-Ṣabāḥ of Kuwait, Šayḥ Haz'āl of Muḥammara, and the *amīr* of Masqat, trying to persuade them of the necessity to establish an independent Arab state³.

In 1914, 'Abdallāh, the second son of Šarīf Ḥusayn of Mecca, visited Egypt and entered into discussions with the British. With that he sowed the seed for the McMahon-Ḥusayn correspondence a year later. While still in Cairo, Riḍā made him a member of the society, swore him in and presented him with its program for a pact between the rulers of the Arabian Peninsula. He suggested a pact wherein the rulers of the Ḥiğāz, Nağd, Yemen and 'Asīr would form a union based on internal independence for each of them and mutual protection of their land against any foreign aggression. Ḥusayn would be the president of the council of this pact, since its meetings would take place in Mecca. 'Abdallāh favoured the program and promised to

² *al-Manār* 21: 4. 28 June 1919: 203. Sa'īd 1934: I, 49-50. al-'Azm 1925: vii.

³ *al-Manār* 28: 1, 3 March 1927 pp. 4-5; 28: 6, 27 August 1927, p. 470. Sa'īd 1934: I. 50. Jamal Pasha 1916: 76.

forward it to his father. Ḥusayn turned the plan down due to his strained relations with the rest of the rulers of the peninsula⁴.

Another reason for the establishment of the society was Riḍā's fear that the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire would fall into the hands of the imperialist European states. This fear increased after the defeat of the Empire against the Italians in Libya (1911) and its defeat in the Balkan War (1912-13). Following these two wars, Riḍā published a pamphlet woven with verses from the Qur'ān, that called for solidarity and unity among the Arabs for the salvation of their land and Islam. In the pamphlet he reported the establishment of a "Superior Committee" whose aim was to form an Arab Association that would protect the Arabian Peninsula and the Arab nation and stand up for their rights. The pamphlet warned the Arabs of the intention of foreigners to gain control over Syria and the shores of the Arabian Peninsula as a first stage, and then "to destroy the Ka'ba and transport the Black Stone and the ashes of the Prophet to the Louvre, museum of antiquities in Paris, capital of France". After vanquishing Mecca and Medina, the pamphlet continued, the Europeans would open saloons and prostitution would spread among Arab women. Therefore, the Arabs should awake and cease their internal quarrels at a time so pregnant with danger. "The Superior Committee for Arab Association" was expecting the Arabs "to prepare you all to fight, so that you will be able to quickly answer the first call". And when the Arabs answered this call they would gain their honour and independence⁵.

With the outbreak of World War I in Europe Riḍā assented to a British request to send messengers to Ibn Sa'ūd, Imām Yaḥyā, al-Idrīsī and a number of Syrian leaders, in order to ask them how they would react when the war spread to the Middle East. He even asked the British for 1,000 Egyptian pounds to finance the messengers, some of whom left for Syria and to the Persian Gulf as emissaries on behalf of the Decentralization Party (a Syrian party established in Egypt in late 1912). When the war broke out in the Middle East, Riḍā considered it an opportunity to start a revolt against the Ottomans and free the Arab countries. Attempting to gain British support, he tried to persuade the British Intelligence Department in Cairo of the

⁴ *al-Manār*. 24: 8, 13 August 1923, p. 607; 28: 1, 3 March 1927, p. 5. Sa'īd 1934: I. 50. 'Abdallāh does not mention in his memoirs that he was a member of the society, probably because for him it was just a marginal episode. However, the fact that he was a member is mentioned in another source. In December 1915 Muḥammad Šarīf al-Farūqī, an Iraqi officer who also was a member of the society, sent a letter to Ḥusayn in which he wrote *inter alia*: "Rašīd Riḍā told me that your honoured son, Amīr 'Abdallāh, share our principles and hopes with us, and we belong to the same association (*ḡamī'a*)". See al-'Umarī 1924-25: I. 219.

⁵ The pamphlet was also distributed by Riḍā when he fulfilled the *ḥaḡḡ* in Mecca in 1916 (see below) and a copy of it fell then into the hands of the French. Its French translation is enclosed with Archives du Ministère des Affaires Étrangères (Paris) (hereafter: MAE), Guerre 1914-18, vol. 1687: despatch 440, Jules-Albert Defrance (Cairo) to Briand, 29 October 1916. See also Riḍā's words in al-'Azm 1925: vii.

influence his society had on the Arab officers in the Ottoman army and of the readiness of these officers to rebel against their Turkish and German commanders. But, added Riḍā, if the British wanted the rebellion to be extensive, they should inform the Arab officers of their willingness to assist them. Through his society, claimed Riḍā, the British could prove not only that they were not the enemy of Islam, but that they were willing to assist the Arabs to gain their independence⁶.

On 24 October 1915, Arthur Henry McMahon, the British high commissioner of Egypt, sent his famous letter to Šarīf Husayn of Mecca, in which he agreed to grant most of the territorial demands the latter had raised, in exchange for his cooperation with the British during the war. The letter, however, included several reservations with regard to the boundaries of the future Arab state promised to the Arabs, especially concerning its north-western boundaries. In December 1915 the British decided to show Riḍā the exact terms of McMahon's letter, after that in conversations with him they had learned that the information leaked to him concerning the letter was incorrect and misleading. Riḍā's reaction after looking into the terms was sharp: "This is an agreement that only an enemy of the Arabs could possibly be satisfied with, or a donkey who does not understand its meaning." Ronald Storrs, the Oriental Secretary of the British Residency in Cairo, who showed Riḍā the terms, blushed, and an angry argument followed. Riḍā complained about the vagueness of most of the articles in the letter, especially in regard to Syria's boundaries, and pointed out that they were contrary to the demands of the Arabs. When asked to put these demands down in writing, he returned two days later with a document titled "General Organic Law of the Arab Empire".

It was the most detailed program written by Riḍā regarding the shape and form of the future Arab Empire he envisioned. Its essence was to establish one large independent Arab state comprising the Arabian Peninsula, Syria and Iraq. This state, however, was to be decentralized, with each of its provinces independent in its internal administration. At the head of the new state there was to be an elected president, responsible for all civic and political matters. There would also be a caliph, of the house of the Šarīfs of Mecca, but he would govern the religious affairs of the state alone. The program also dealt with the relations between the independent rulers of the Arabian Peninsula and the new empire, and with other issues related to freedom of religion and the rights of minorities. The British did not take Riḍā's program seriously. They claimed that he did not represent the opinion of the Arab world, that his proposals were too progressive, and that there was no chance that the rulers of

⁶ Sa'īd 1960: 37. Israel State Archives (Jerusalem), 65/2855: note by Intelligence Department, War Office (Cairo), 16 November 1914.

the Arabian Peninsula would consent to accept the article of his program that subordinated them to the new empire⁷.

In June 1916, Šarīf Ḥusayn of Mecca opened his Arab revolt against the Ottomans. Riḍā supported the Arab revolt enthusiastically, considering it the beginning of the realization of his dreams. In his periodical *al-Manār* he wrote: "The interest of the Muslims in general is that the Arab countries would be strong by themselves and would not need an outside force to defend them." In articles published by him in *al-Abrām* and *al-Manār*, he clarified that the hope of the Muslims was that Ḥusayn's revolt would bring about the establishment of a strong independent Arab empire, free of foreign influences. He strongly attacked the Committee of Union and Progress people and their Turanian nationalism, who trying to separate the Turkish race from Islam gained the hatred of all the Muslims and especially of the 'ulamā'. He reminded them their Turkification policy from before the war, and argued that their object had been to erase the Arab race and assimilate it with the Turkish one. Every Arab who knew the extent of their mischief could not but hate them. In this situation, the Arabs could no longer constitute a part of the Ottoman Empire⁸.

Since the Arab revolt had broken out, Riḍā tried without success to receive an invitation to come to Mecca to be given there some office. In mid-July there were rumours in Ġidda that Riḍā was about to come to the Ḥiğāz with the intention of stirring up strife against the British. An agent of the British in Ġidda who got wind of this, recommended Ronald Storrs to make it impossible for Riḍā to leave Egypt, or even better to deport him to Malta altogether. (Later, when the British intercepted several of Riḍā's letters, in which he propagandized against them, they arrested him and intended to deport him to Malta. Eventually, however, they did not do it, in order not to damage their position in Egypt, though they kept him under close surveillance.) It was, however, only four months after the outbreak of the revolt that Riḍā managed to reach Mecca⁹.

In early October 1916 Riḍā arrived in Mecca as a pilgrim, accompanying a delegation on behalf of Ḥusayn Kāmil, the Sultan of Egypt. The open aim of his arrival

⁷ An English translation of the original document is enclosed with FO 882/15: note, Ronald Storrs (Cairo) to Clayton, 5 December 1915. See also *ibid.*: "Note on Proposals drawn up by šayḥ Rašīd Riḍā for formation of an Arab Kingdom" (Cairo), 9 December 1915, and *al-Manār* 22:6, 6 June 1921, p. 449.

⁸ MAE, Guerre 1914-18, 1682: despatch 265, Defrance to Briand, 18 July 1916 (enclosing a summary of an article published in *al-Abrām* on 9 July 1916). FO 882/2: "The Opinions of the Elect (i. e. Moslems) on the Arab Question", translation of an article published on 29 August 1916. *al-Manār*, 19: 2, 5 July 1916, p. 82; 19: 4, 28 September 1916, pp. 237-238 (citing an article published in *al-Abrām* on 16 September 1916). aš-Šarbasī 1970: 153.

⁹ FO 882/4: letter, [Ḥusayn] R[ūḥī] (Ġidda) to R[onald] S[torrs], 17 July 1916 (cited also in Storrs 1937: 192). MAE, Guerre 1914-18, 1687: despatch 440, Defrance to Briand, 29 October 1916. Arslan 1937: 156.

was for *ḥağğ* purposes, but it soon turned out that he had some ulterior objects. At first, it was reported that he propagandized against the British, as had been feared formerly. An agent of the British who slept near the tent of the French delegation (Muslim French, natives of North Africa), related that he had heard Riḍā telling the French that everyone in Egypt was sick of the British. Ḥusayn was very troubled by Riḍā's anti-British tendencies. Yet, eventually, Riḍā's activities during the *ḥağğ* were mainly focused on the French¹⁰.

Riḍā began to disseminate among the pilgrims the pamphlet he had published in 1913, which included anti-European propaganda and therefore fitted his present objects. Its climax was, one might recall, the assertion that the French intended "to destroy the Ka'ba and transport the Black Stone and the ashes of the Prophet to the Louvre". The head of the French delegation complained to Ḥusayn about this, and Ḥusayn hinted to Riḍā that distributing the pamphlet was undesirable. Riḍā, nonetheless, did not content himself with the pamphlet. In a speech he delivered to pilgrims in Mīnā, he spoke about the Arab kingdom in the time of the Crusaders, about the Moors invasion into Spain and France, and finally about the French ambitions in Syria. Ḥusayn, who attended the speech, silenced him publicly, and did the same each time Riḍā tried to speak against the Allies. He actually ordered him not to speak on such topics. When Riḍā's speech was later on published in *al-Qibla*, the Arab rebels' newspaper, Ḥusayn checked it personally in advance and censored all the paragraphs that treated European politics and especially the French ambitions in Syria¹¹.

However, the main purpose of Riḍā's visit to Mecca was to convince Ḥusayn to join the program of his society to form an alliance (*ḥilf*) between the rulers of the Ḥiḡāz, °Asīr, Yemen and Nağd, in which each ruler would independently govern his internal affairs, and cooperate with the others in defending the peninsula from foreign aggression. At the head of the alliance there would be a "Council of the Alliance" (*mağlis al-ḥilf*), which would convene once a year in Mecca to discuss common interests, resulting from this that Ḥusayn would be considered the president of the alliance. Riḍā presented the program to Ḥusayn, but the latter refused it. He told

¹⁰ FO 371/2776: despatch 8, Cyril E. Wilson (Ğidda) to McMahon n. d., enclosed with despatch 280, Arthur Henry McMahon (Cairo) to Grey, 26 October 1916. aš-Šarbasī 1970: 153.

¹¹ MAE, Guerre 1914-18, 1704: telegram, Ben Ğabrit (Mecca) to Ğidda, 13 October 1916; telegram, Edouard Brémont (Ğidda) to French Minister (Cairo), 27 October 1916. MAE, Guerre 1914-18, 1687: telegram 401, Defrance to MAE, 16 October 1916; despatch 440, Defrance to Briand, 29 October 1916. MAE, Guerre 1914-18, 1693: report by Béchir Dinguzli, 26 October 1916, enclosed with despatch 121, French Resident (Tunis) to Briand, 28 February 1917. School of Oriental Studies, University of Durham (Durham), Wingate Papers 141/1: telegram, Brémont, 11 October 1916; 143/6: letter, Gilbert F. Clayton (Cairo) to Wingate, 20 November 1916. Public Record Office, War Office Records 33/905: telegram 25612, Director of Military Intelligence to General Headquarters, Egypt, 28 November 1916. *al-Qibla*, 17, 13 October 1916. Brémont 1931: 53-54. Riḍā's speech is cited in Dagher 1916: 226-231.

him that he would agree to discuss the program only after he had conquered Medina from the Ottomans, so there would be no suspicion that he wanted to enter into an alliance due to his weakness. Riḍā then suggested that several Arab notables would present the program to the other rulers of the peninsula – not in Ḥusayn's name – and only after the latter had agreed, Ḥusayn would announce his own acceptance. Ḥusayn refused this too. A members of Riḍā's society later informed him that after he had left Ḥusayn told his retinue: "There is a thing today called the Imām of Yemen and a thing called Ibn Saʿūd. Tomorrow, nothing will be left of these names. All the Arab countries will constitute one single kingdom, submitting to one king." (According to another version, Ḥusayn simply said: "Who are these dogs that I should enter into an alliance with them?") Riḍā never forgave Ḥusayn for refusing to accept his program to arrive at an Arab union, and he accused him that what motivated him was his will to become king of all the Arab countries and caliph of all the Muslims, relying on the British¹².

In October 1916 discussions were held in Mecca in preparation of Ḥusayn's coronation (which took place at the end of that month) and the establishment of an Arab government in the Ḥiǧāz. Riḍā warned Ḥusayn not to think about being declared caliph. He reminded him the *ḥadīth*: "If two caliphs were pledged alliance to, kill the second of them." He also told him that a pledge of alliance (*bayʿa*) by the people of the Ḥiǧāz would be worthless, since they were not from among the influential people of the Muslim *umma* and not at liberty to choose at their own free will. He pointed out as well that large portions of the Muslim world opposed the Arab revolt. All these arguments were of course disagreeable to Ḥusayn. It is not surprising therefore that when Riḍā offered him his services (some said his journalistic services, others that he wanted to become his *Ṣayḥ* al-Islām), Ḥusayn definitely refused. Riḍā's anti-European proclivities, his union plan, and his words to Ḥusayn concerning the caliphate, made him *persona non grata* in the Ḥiǧāz. In mid-October 1916 Riḍā returned to Egypt empty-handed¹³.

At the beginning of 1917 Riḍā expressed himself in *al-Manār* in a manner considered by Ḥusayn to be offensive to the Arab government of the Ḥiǧāz. In May 1917, the Ḥiǧāzi Ministry of the Interior published an announcement in *al-Qibla*, according to which *al-Manār* was forbidden thenceforth to enter the bounds of the Hāšimite kingdom because of the offensive expressions published in it concerning the Arab government. The directors of the Ḥiǧāzi post offices received appropriate instructions

¹² *al-Manār* 22: 6, 6 June 1921, p. 447; 24: 8, 13 August 1923, p. 607; 33: 9, 28 February 1934, p. 712.

¹³ MAE, Guerre 1914-18, 1704: telegram, Brémond to MAE, 15 October 1916. *al-Manār* 22:6, 6 June 1921, p. 448. Brémond 1931: 54. Jung 1924-25: II. 26.

in this spirit. The split between Riḍā and Ḥusayn became at this stage a *fait accompli*¹⁴.

The third encounter between Riḍā and a member of the Hāšimite family occurred in 1920, this time with Fayṣal, Ḥusayn's third son. However, the conditions then were completely different from those that had existed on the former two occasions. At the end of World War I the whole Fertile Crescent was under the control of the British army. Yet, while in Iraq a direct British rule was installed, the British army in Syria confined itself to its barracks and an independent Arab government was established, headed by *Amīr* Fayṣal. This government held out for almost two years, until in July 1920 it was destroyed by the French in the battle of Maysalūn. Fayṣal himself was obliged to sail to Europe in November 1918 in order to take part in the Paris peace conference. He returned to Syria in April 1919, but in September was obliged to leave again in order to enter into negotiations with the French about Syria's fate. The fact that Fayṣal stayed in Europe for a considerable part of this period resulted in the actual rule of his short-lived state being in the hands of the secret nationalist society *al-Fatāt* and several other political organizations, while Fayṣal's influence in Syria was rather limited.

In mid-1919 Riḍā decided to return to Syria. When he arrived in Damascus he was elected to be representative of Tripoli in the Syrian Congress. During his whole stay in Syria Riḍā was a staunch adherent of absolute independence, and he joined the *al-Fatāt* society, which led the Syrian campaign for absolute independence. Since *al-Fatāt* kept its secrecy also in this period, its influence was mainly behind the scenes. For conducting its public activities *al-Fatāt* founded the "Arab Independence Party" (*Ḥizb al-Istiqlāl al-ʿArabī*) which was no more than its overt mouthpiece. Riḍā also joined the party, presided over some of its conferences, and soon was considered one of its prominent members. Riḍā was also participating in the demonstrations held by the "Committee for National Defence", the most extremist political body in Syria in that time, which was not content even with the nationalist activity of *al-Fatāt* and was the most anti-French organization in the country¹⁵.

When Riḍā arrived in Syria, Fayṣal was already on his second visit to Europe. Therefore, Riḍā met Fayṣal for the first time only in mid-January 1920, when the latter returned from Europe. For the next few weeks they met several times for private conversations and Riḍā tried to convince him to accept his plan to form an alliance between the rulers of the Arabian Peninsula. He explained to him the damage ensuing from the hostility existing between the Ḥiǧāz and Ibn Saʿūd, and pointed out

¹⁴ *al-Qibla* 78, 14 May 1917. MAE, Guerre 1914-18, 1697: despatch 346, Defrance to Ribot, 18 July 1917. *al-Manār*, 22: 6, 6 June 1921, p. 448.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 23: 4, 27 April 1922, p. 316; 33: 9, 28 February 1934, p. 712 (excerpt from Riḍā's diary, 9 February 1920); 33: 10, 15 April 1934, p. 796 (excerpt from Riḍā's diary, 21 February 1920). Darwaza 1950-53: I. 77, 97. *al-Ḥakīm* 1966: 93.

that if his plan for such a union was realized it would place the *amīrs* of the Ḥiǧāz at the head of the Arabs, since the general council of the alliance (*maǧlis al-ḥilf al-āmm*) would meet in Mecca. It would convene once a year under the presidency of the *Amīr* of Mecca and discuss the common interests of the Arabs. Fayṣal approved of the plan and promised Ridā to do his best to convince his father to agree to it too. Ridā then related to him about his own failure to convince Ḥusayn to adhere to his plan, and the offensive way in which Ḥusayn had reacted to it. He cited Ḥusayn's words that in the future all the Arab countries "will constitute one single kingdom, submitting to one king", and told Fayṣal about this that "unity can be achieved only by complying with the law, not by submitting to a ruler". The nation would not be prepared to be ruled by an autocrat¹⁶.

In March 1920 the Syrian nationalists obliged Fayṣal to convene the Syrian Congress to discuss the declaration of Syria's independence and Fayṣal's enthronement¹⁷. On the eve of the declaration the members of the Independence Party were meeting constantly every night to discuss the subject of independence and the form of the state after the declaration. They discussed the status of the future Syrian government and the status of the congress, and decided that the congress should continue to exist also after the declaration. While Fayṣal believed that the congress would disperse after the declaration and a committee would be set up to draw up a constitution for the state, the members of the Independence Party decided that the congress would continue to operate until a permanent parliament was established, and that it would be the congress to write the constitution. A sharp controversy between the congress and Fayṣal developed. According to the declaration of independence, the government to be formed was to be subordinate to the congress until the establishment of parliament. Consequently, the congress expected the new government to present its political platform before the congress for approval and a vote of confidence.

The designated prime minister, ʿAlī Ridā ar-Rikabī, reported this to Fayṣal, who got angry and announced that the congress had exceeded its authority. He would not agree that the government would be subordinate to the congress, "most of whose members are inexperienced youngsters, mindless, and of no importance". The congress persisted in its opinion and Fayṣal persisted in his. Congress member Ridā was sent to mediate between the two sides. Fayṣal claimed to him that since the congress was not a parliament it was not entitled to require the government to request its con-

¹⁶ *al-Manār* 33: 8, 31 December 1933, pp. 633-634; 33: 9, 28 February 1934, p. 712 (excerpt from Ridā's diary, 9 February 1920). Ridā also suggested to Fayṣal to send a messenger to Ibn Saʿūd, with letters to him from each of them about the need to accomplish Arab unity. See *ibid.* p. 713 (excerpt from Ridā's diary, 10 February 1920).

¹⁷ Ridā claims that he was the first to suggest to declare Syria's independence, in order to present Europe with a *fait accompli*. See *ibid.* 714 (excerpt from Ridā's diary, 10 February 1920), and 34: 1, 14 May 1934, p. 68.

fidence. Riḍā answered him that the congress stood at a higher level than a parliament. Fayṣal replied that he had created the congress and that he was not prepared to grant it such authority. Riḍā answered: "No! The congress created you. Before that, you were only a commander on behalf of Allenby, the supreme commander of the British army, and it was the congress that made you King of Syria". And in addition to this, the congress met in the name of the nation, which had the supreme authority according to the Islamic *ṣarīʿa*, and at the same time that the congress decided to make Fayṣal king it also decided on subordinating the government to it. Riḍā also told him that if already in the first moment after the declaration of independence there was dissension between the congress and the government, they would become a byword, and it would be a proof that the Syrians were not qualified for independence. And for conclusion, Riḍā calmed Fayṣal that in any case, "most of the members of the congress are of our party (meaning the Independence Party), and the members of the government are also of our party", so there was nothing to worry about. The argument ended with Fayṣal consenting to permit ar-Rikabī to present the government platform before the congress¹⁸.

Ar-Rikabī's government formed after the declaration of Syria's independence did not last long. Accusations cast on it that it was too moderate and did not prepare the country to fight the French brought about its downfall. On 3 May the task of forming a new government was assigned to the president of the Syrian Congress, Hāšim al-Atasī. Two days later Riḍā was elected president of the congress in his place, a position he continued to hold until the destruction of the Syrian state¹⁹.

On 14 July General Gouraud, the French high commissioner in Beirut, sent his famous ultimatum to Fayṣal, to the effect that his forces would take over Syria by force unless the Arab government accepted the French mandate without any reservations. When Gouraud's ultimatum arrived, a delegation of the Independence Party, headed by Riḍā, came to Fayṣal and demanded that he replace the al-Atasī government with one more suited to the new situation, preferably headed by a senior army officer. Fayṣal answered them rudely that he would not act according to the opinion of any society or party, nor even according to the opinion of the congress. Relates Riḍā: "I gave him an answer harder and ruder than his answer"²⁰.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* 21: 8, 17 June 1920, p. 435; 23: 5, 27 May 1922, pp. 392-393; 33: 10, 15 April 1934, p. 798; 34: 2, 13 June 1934, pp. 152-154.

¹⁹ Archives du Ministère de la Guerre, Service Historique de l'Armée de Terre (Vincennes), 6N189: "Rapport hebdomadaire (Semaine du 4 au 10 Mai 1920)". FO 371/5035: telegram 555G, General Headquarters, Egypt to War Office, 13 May 1920. *Le Temps* 13 May 1920. *al-Manār* 34: 2, 13 June 1934, pp. 156-157. *al-Hakīm* 1966: 157, 160. Darwaza 1950-53: I. 122. Sa'īd 1934: II/1. 144-145. Qadrī 1956: 205, 207.

²⁰ *al-Manār* 23: 4, 27 April 1922, p. 316.

Fayṣal decided to accept the ultimatum, but his acceptance reached the French too late; they in any case were determined to bring the independence of the Syrian state to an end. On 24 July the French forces crushed the Syrian army in Ḥān Maysalūn, and the next day they entered Damascus. On 28 July Fayṣal left Syria. Riḍā found himself forced to leave Syria once again, returning to Egypt²¹.

In 1921 Riḍā wrote in *al-Manār*: "The King of the Ḥiǧāz and his sons do not represent the Arab nation. On the contrary, most of the Arabs and non-Arab Muslims are not content with them". In 1923 he even issued a *fatwa* calling the Muslims to save the Ḥiǧāz from the heresy and oppression of Ḥusayn. In a book he published that year, titled *al-Ḥilāfa aw al-imāma al-ʿuzmā* (The Caliphate or the Great Imamate), Riḍā linked his resentment against Ḥusayn to his hostility towards the British: "The king who nowadays rules over the Ḥiǧāz bases his reign upon a non-Muslim state that subjugates many of the Muslim peoples". The events of World War I and its consequences led Riḍā to form a negative opinion on both the British and Ḥusayn. As a matter of fact, it was but two aspects of the same matter: both rejected his plan to arrive at an Arab union and his principles for a new pan-Arab empire. Riḍā's perceptions of what the proper regime for a state according to the Islamic law was, also brought him to recurrently oppose any attempt by Fayṣal to rule Syria autocratically. Since Riḍā believed, as he wrote in the same book, that "the rule over the nation should be in its own hands"²².

REFERENCES

A. Primary sources

- Riḍā, *Ḥilāfa* = Riḍā, Muhammad Rašīd, *al-Ḥilāfa aw al-imāma al-ʿuzmā*. Cairo, 1923.
 Riḍā, *Istiftāʾ* = Riḍā, Muḥammad Rašīd, "al-Istiftāʾ fī Malik al-Ḥiǧāz". *al-Manār* 24:
 8. 13 August 1923; 29: 1. 3 March 1927.

B. Secondary sources

- Adams, Charles C. 1968. *Islam and Modernism in Egypt: A Study of the Modern Reform Movement Inaugurated by Muḥammad ʿAbduh*. New York. [1933]
 Arslān, Šakīb. 1937. *as-Sayyid Rašīd Riḍā aw iḥa' arba' in sana*. Damascus.

²¹ aš-Šarbasī 1970: 156. Arslan 1937: 157.

²² *al-Manār* 22: 6, 6 June 1921, p. 479. On Riḍā's *fatwa* see his article *Istiftāʾ*: 593-618 (especially 612), and also 5-6. Riḍā, *Ḥilāfa*: 5, 74. When becoming anti-Hāšimite Riḍā also turned into a supporter of Ibn Saʿūd. It stemmed not only from the fact that Ibn Saʿūd was a Waḥḥābī and therefore perceived by Riḍā as close to his Salafī views, but also from Ibn Saʿūd being the only practicable candidate to expel Ḥusayn from the Ḥiǧāz, as eventually happened in practice.

- al-ʿAzm, Rafīq. 1925. *Mağmūʿat ātār Rafīq Bek al-ʿAzm*. Cairo.
- Brémond, Edouard. 1931. *Le Hedjaz dans la guerre mondiale*. Paris.
- Daghir, Asʿad. 1916. *Aḥad aʿdāʾ al-ġamʿiyya al-ʿarabiyya. Tawrat al-ʿarab: muqaddimatuḥā, asbābuhā, natāʾiġuhā*. Cairo.
- Darwaza, Muḥammad ʿIzzat. 1950-53. *Ḥawla l-ḥaraka l-ʿarabiyya l-ḥadīṭa*. Sidon.
- Ġamal Pasha. 1916. (al-Qāʾid al-ʿāmm li-l-ġayš ar-Rābiʿ). *Īdāḥāt ʿan al-masāʾil as-siyāsiyya allatī ġarat tadqīquḥā bi-Dīwān al-Ḥarb al-ʿUrfī al-Mutašakkil bi-ʿAleyb*. Istanbul.
- al-Ḥakīm, Yūsuf. 1966. *Sūriyya wa-l-ʿahd al-fayṣalī*. Beirut.
- Jung, Eugène. 1924-25. *La Révolte arabe*. Paris.
- Qadrī, Aḥmad. 1956. *Mudakkirātī ʿan at-tawra al-ʿarabiyya al-kubrā*. Damascus.
- Saʿīd, Amīn. 1934. *at-Tawra al-ʿarabiyya al-kubrā*. Cairo.
- . 1960. *Asrār at-tawra al-ʿarabiyya al-kubrā wa-Maʿsat aš-Šarīf Ḥusayn*. Beirut.
- aš-Šarbasī, Aḥmad. 1970. *Rašīd Ridā šāḥib al-Manār: asruhu wa-ḥayātuhu wa-mašādir taqāfatuhu*. Cairo.
- Storrs, Ronald. 1937. *Orientalisms*. London.
- al-ʿUmarī, Muḥammad Ṭāhir. 1924-25. *Taʾrīḥ muqaddarat al-ʿIrāq as-siyāsiyya*. Baghdad.