

Again, in February, 1918, the acting British Agent in Jedda, Lieutenant-Colonel Bassett, wrote to the Sherif of Mecca :

“ His Majesty’s Government and their Allies stand steadfastly by every cause aiming at the liberation of the oppressed nations, and they are determined to stand by the Arab peoples in their struggle for the establishment of an Arab world in which law shall replace Ottoman injustice and in which unity shall prevail over the rivalries artificially provoked by the policy of Turkish officials. His Majesty’s Government reaffirm their former pledge in regard to the liberation of the Arab peoples. His Majesty’s Government have hitherto made it their policy to ensure that liberation, and it remains the policy they are determined unflinchingly to pursue by protecting such Arabs as are already liberated from all dangers and perils, and by assisting those who are still under the yoke of the tyrants to obtain their freedom.”

Then again, in June, 1918, the British Government, in what is known as the Declaration to the Seven, pledged that “ In regard to areas occupied by Allied Forces, . . . it is the wish and desire of His Majesty’s Government that the future Government of these regions should be based upon the principle of the consent of the governed, and this policy has and will continue to have the support of His Majesty’s Government.”

Then again, in November, 1918, the Anglo-French Declaration was made, which stated that the object aimed at by France and the United Kingdom in prosecuting the war in the East is the “ complete and definite emancipation of the peoples . . . and the establishment of national Governments and administrations, deriving their authority from the initiative and free choice of the indigenous populations. In order to carry out these intentions, France and Great Britain are at one in encouraging and assisting the establishment of indigenous Governments and administrations in Syria and Mesopotamia, now liberated by the Allies, and in the territories the liberation of which they are engaged in securing, and recognizing these as soon as they are actually established. Far from wishing to impose on the populations of these regions any particular institutions, they are only concerned to ensure by their support and by adequate assistance the regular working of Governments and administrations, freely chosen by the populations themselves.”

One of the matters which the Special Committee to be set up will therefore have to investigate will be the various pledges given to the Arabs before and after the Balfour Declaration with regard to the recognition of their independence.

The struggle which had as its backbone the will and determination of the Arabs to realize their Independence was spurred and encouraged by the assurances of the Allied Powers regarding independence, political freedom, and the establishment of Governments freely chosen. The Arabs, in fact, made a substantial contribution to the Allied victory in the first world struggle. King Hussein, of the Hedjaz, joined the Allied armies, and Arabs from Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine answered his call for revolt and joined the ranks of the Allies and fought with them.

To quote from the report of the British Military Commission of Inquiry set up to investigate causes of the disturbances in 1920 in Jerusalem :—

“ In fact, in June, 1918, recruitment for the Allied Sherif Army was in full swing in Palestine. Those recruited were under the impression that they were fighting for the National Cause and the liberation of their fatherland, while the evidence now before us shows that the real impression left in the minds of the Arabs as a whole was that the British Government would undertake the formation of an independent Arab State comprising Palestine.”