Chapter IV

SAINT JOHN PHILBY

Although not accidental but it just so occurs that men with eccentric qualities are mostly seen in countries where conformism is de rigueur. It is, therefore, not surprising that India, a country notorious for its conformism, especially in the past, has been more fertile than any other single country in producing eccentric men and women, a breed which seems to have departed forever after the death of Philby in 1960. These eccentric personalities generally revolt against the established way of thinking, social norms or general rule of their time.

Philby (1885-1960) is often ranked with Wilfrid Scawen Blunt (1840-1922) for they both loathed imperialism and supported the cause of Arab independence. He is also compared with T.E. Lawrence (1888-1935) for they both had a unique fascination for the Arabs and worked to promote their (Arabs) 'interests' in their peculiar style. But in many respects, as will be seen later on, Philby was different from the other two. He was in fact a class by himself or, as many people would prefer to say that he was a glaring example of a paradoxical personality by any standard. For, while claiming to be a socialist he often flirted with conservatives or despite being a declared pacifist he approved of or at least showed indifference to Ibn Saud's bloody wars.
It is, however, undisputed that he was highly adventurous, studious, intelligent and a prolific writer. Moreover, he was an excellent Arabist and knew the Arab realities from primary sources. But despite these qualities he was not a suitable man from the standpoint of British imperialism. For he was an opinionated person, a non-conformist and lacked the tact and poise of Lawrence and Miss Bell to win the favour of the men in power and persuade them to act as he liked or advised. As a result he, unlike Lawrence and Bell, could not perform well on Britain's political stage.

Bell, Lawrence and Philby all have written extensively about the history and civilization of the Arab people. But their aims and intentions were different. Bell and Lawrence were committed imperial agents and the purpose of their academic career was to provide information to the British imperialists in order to exploit the economically poor and politically backward nations and prolong their imperial presence in the Arab world. Philby, however, was made of a different stuff. He criticised imperialism as out dated which in his opinion was inimical not only towards the colonized people but also did a real disservice to Britain's image abroad. His image of Britain as a world power was that it should help underdeveloped or less advanced nations
to achieve and enjoy independence and stand firmly on their feet. He further pinned that such a gesture of British generosity would enhance its international image on the one hand and serve its economic and political interest on the other. In sum he was anti-imperialist and not anti-Britain.

Philby, unlike Bell and Lawrence, has not been given due scholarly attention mainly owing to his anti-imperialist stand. His contribution to Arab studies, however, is enormous. He has written on a variety of subjects such as 'history and the classics, the literature of several modern languages, archaeology and the sciences, politics, economics and finance, geology and the animal Kingdom'.(1) But mainly he was concerned with cultural and political aspirations of the Arab people and presented their case in a prudent intellectual manner. His aim, unlike that of Lawrence and Bell, in knowing the Arabs was not to rule them. In fact due to his long association with the Arabs of all kind, especially with one of their most powerful leaders, Ibn Saud which ultimately led him to embrace the faith of Islam he was more fitted and better placed than others to understand and write about the Arab aspirations for unity and their desire to throw off the yoke of infidel imperial rule. He also showed courage and

candour to condemn the imperial policies and the brutalities committed by his country, Great Britain, an outstanding contribution which is rarely found in the writings of his prominent contemporaries. On the basis of the reasons stated above it would not be improper, rather useful and appropriate, to make a comprehensive study of Philby's ideas and views on various Arab issues and problems which were commonly known in his time and some of them still remain unresolved.

Throughout his career, academic, political and administrative, Philby was bold and outspoken. He never hesitated from airing his viewpoint on any given question and problem even if it went against his own interests. Instances of his boldness are numerous. For example it was not impossible for him and obviously it would have been in his best interest to confirm to instead of opposing and criticizing the official British policy while he was serving in Iraq and Jordan. Had he done so no pressure could have been exerted on him to resign from his government post and face economic hardship. Likewise it should have been possible for him not to criticise the vagaries of the Saudi regime, as most of his European contemporaries based in Arabia did, in order to avoid the wrath of King Saud who banished him from the country though for a short period.

But there is another aspect of Philby's character. Obviously he was human, hence not free from shortcomings.
Whether amidst his family members and friends or in the company of outstanding personalities he used to make his presence felt and liked, even tried to project himself as being a dominant and extraordinary figure. Moreover, his aversion to opposition or opposite views was so strong and vehement that he used to become almost intolerant when things did not go the way he liked. Any thing that went against his will or tended to challenge his dominant position was bound to irritate him and invite his indignation. Infact he was the sort of person who could be easily pleased and even more easily could be incited to grouse and growl. This habit seems to have become his second nature. It will be frequently witnessed in this chapter that he was very fond of forming an opinion on every issue and always tried to play a role accordingly.

Independent thinking is an asset, an admirable quality which merits to be appreciated by one and all. However, the moment it makes one regard himself as an expert par excellence whose opinion or policies must be appreciated and adopted by all it becomes alarmingly dangerous. For 'his bloated' ego makes him behave with others in a way as they were academically and intellectually inferior to him. Moreover, it is in the nature of such men that they always try to prove themselves to be right and others wrong. They find a
certain kind of psychological and emotional satisfaction in doing so that makes them blind even to highly genuine criticism. While going through Philby's works one is often compelled to think that he is engaged in such a business. Sometime he even appears to have indulged in self-aggrandizement.

Philby had, however, some characteristics and virtues which were shared by the Arabs and hence bound to bring him closer to them. In the first place his approach was highly individualistic and it was probably because of this that he became so deeply attached with the Arab people who are 'individualist in the highest degree', and in their 'lands the Trinity of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity is worshiped more frequently than even it was in France'.

Similarly, as Freya Stark has put it, Philby was 'gregarious and pugnacious, open in his enmities and warm in his friendship'. Stark was probably prompted to pass the above remark after having been inspired by a famous Arab saying that in fact reflects a peculiar Arab characteristic: the enemy of my friend is my enemy and the enemy of my enemy is my friend.

Another characteristic of Philby was that he used to see things in black and white and had courage to call

a spade a spade. It is a quality which is widely appreciated and admired by the Arabs, especially by the Bedouins. But in his native Britain it was regarded as a major flaw in any personality. To a considerable extent it was this aspect of Philby's personality and character that deprived him of many rewards and marred his chances of success in British politics and civil service. Elizabeth Monroe, Philby's biographer, was to the point when she remarked.

Philby is often bracketed with Lawrence because they both worked in the Arab World, but they were opposites in their handling of its arbiters. Where Lawrence rightly judged the tempo that suited the men in power, and was able to cajole them into doing as he advised, Philby, hectoring, intemperate and opinionated, provoked their wrath and lost his case. All through his life he saw himself as acting from the highest motives, and with a right, in a free country, to think what he liked and say what he thought about broken British promises or his conscientious objection to war. The flaw in him was not the creeds he preached but his immoderation in expounding them. (1)

Monroe further says that Philby after having failed in achieving fame and success in his native country 'sought abroad the fame he reckoned he deserved.' (2) To a certain

2. Ibid.
extent her remark was not off the mark. However, it should also be kept in mind that Philby had after all some qualities and characteristics which were similar to those of the Arabs and thus it was natural for him to seek their companionship. Birds of the same feather flock together.

**Philby's Conversion to Islam**

Philby's conversion took place in 1930. His conversion, as expected, became a big news both in Arabia and abroad. Many prominent Muslims including Ibn Saud welcomed him to the fold of Islam. However, there was no dearth of men who had reservations about his sincerity. Some of Ibn Saud's high-ranking officials were also critical of him and continued to suspect even after his conversion that he was an agent of Great Britain sent to Saudi Arabia for the purpose of espionage.

Philby's conversion was not the result of a sudden and hasty decision. In fact he was contemplating to adopt Islam since his resignation from his government post in 1924. Many a time he felt like doing it. So were many Arabs who expected that one day he would surely embrace Islam. For instance in 1917-1918 when he was journeying among the Arabs of Najd a certain Idris bin Mutammat, when requested by Philby to consider him a Najdi, replied piously that by the grace of God he (Philby) will become a Muslim by adopting the true faith. (1) But that opportune time came only after twelve

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years in the summer of 1930 when he was invited by Ibn Saud to Mecca to enter the fold of Islam.

In early years of the running century Christendom was not as much liberal and irreligious as it appears to be in its closing quarter. Likewise people, not only missionaries but also common folk, were of the opinion mainly owing to their imperialist and racist outlook that their religion, Christianity, was superior to world religions including Islam. Even non-practising Christians used to become greatly perturbed and upset whenever a Christian gave up his faith in order to embrace an oriental religion. They simply could not understand and failed to see any merits in the belief systems of their subject races. Obviously for men having such a mentality and outlook Philby's conversion was bound to be a shocking event. His family members and friends were especially upset. After hearing the 'sad news' Dora, Philby's wife, wrote to the later's mother, May:

I've had the most disturbing letter from Jack (Philby). So he has taken the step at last. It does not matter really, I suppose. I don't know quite what to think of it and on the whole I am sorry.(1)

Philby's friends and acquaintances such as Percy Cox and Arnold Wilson were also shocked and criticised his

1. Quoted in Monroe, E. Philby of Arabia, op. cit. P. 169.
decision to embrace Islam. But from all such accounts it does appear that both his family members as well as his close friends, unlike Ibn Saud's officials, had no semblance of doubt about his sincerity. However, Elizabeth Monroe who in 1973 wrote Philby's biography has expressed the opinion that he had not sincerely converted to Islam. She has quoted extensively from Philby's unpublished diaries and from men close to him in order to prove her point. In fact she was of the opinion that Philby adopted the Islamic faith, firstly, to have easier access to the King in order to get business contracts in the country and, secondly, to fulfil his desire of being the first European to cross the desert tract commonly known as the Rub al Khali or the Empty Quarter.\(^1\)

Monroe, however, accepts that Philby's conversion was not unexpected, for he was contemplating to embrace Islam for quite a long time. According to Philby's unpublished diaries from which Monroe has extensively quoted he himself divided his life into two phases. In his first phase he was a deeply religious and devout Christian. The second phase began with his mission to Trinity College, Cambridge. In his mind underwent a drastic change. He gradually became a socialist, anti-

\(^1\) See Ibid. P. 163.
imperialist and even an atheist. The third phase started when he resigned from the British Government and began to think of adopting the Islamic faith. Monroe finds it difficult to believe that how a man 'to whom the existence of God had been intellectually incredible since 1907' would all of a sudden embrace Islam 'a religion that hung upon His oneness, as if God could be switched on and off like a light'. In her final opinion Philby embraced Islam not because of some inner or spiritual urge inside him but for the sake of convenience. She further supported her stand by quoting the following words of an Englishman:

'I saw him once alone (wrote Hope Gill, in-charge of the British Legation in the summer of 1930). He made no pretence whatever that his conversion was spiritual. He had been deliberating the step for years, ever since the first hot moments of his rage against HMG's Arab policy. This had now cooled, and the process had left him without rancour, but his disassociation from British ideals remained and he felt increasingly cutoff from things British and drawn to things Arabian.'

The main thrust of Monroe's argument, as evident from the above discussion was that there was no spiritual

1. Ibid. P. 164.
2. pp. 164-165
motivation behind Philby's conversion. This might have been true to some extent. However, her comment that how an agnostic person can suddenly become a devout religious man seems ridiculous. Because if it is possible for a man to abandon his faith and espouse agnosticism it should not be difficult or impossible for him to give up his agnostic ideas and start believing once again in the existence of God.

It will be unfair if Philby's own explanations and reasons for his conversion that he offered on various occasions are not taken into account. Soon after his conversion he was requested by Ibn Saud to explain what prompted him to embrace the Islamic faith. Complying with the King's request he wrote a brief in Umm al Qura in which he categorically stated that 'Allah has opened my heart to the acceptance of Islam and has guided me to accept this religion in the root of belief and full conviction of my conscience.' (1) But this was, more or less, a declaration of faith rather than an explanation of the reasons which led him to embrace Islam. However, in another article he offered a somewhat convincing explanation. His main argument was that like Cromwell's puritanism the Wahhabee movement led by Ibn Saud was a source of strength and power in Arabia:

1. Ibid. P. 168.
The present Arabian puritan movement
baringers an epoch of future politi-
cal greatness based on strong
moral and spiritual foundations. Also
I regard the Islamic ethical system
as a real democratic fraternity, and
the general conduct of life, including
marriage, divorce and the absence of
unjust stigma of bastardy, resulting
in a high standard of Arabian public
morality, as definitely superior to
the European ethical code based on
Christianity.... I consider an open
declaration of my sympathy with Ara-
bian religion and political ideals as
the best methods of assisting the deve-
lopment of Arabian greatness.\(^1\)

Philby's friends, as mentioned earlier, were not
happy with his acceptance of Islam. To many of them he wrote
letters explaining why he had espoused the Islamic faith.
In his letter to Donald Robertson with whom he was very
close and frank he offered probably the most convincing
reason. 'My future', he wrote, 'is irrevocably bound up
with Arabia and Ibn Saud.'\(^2\) He further explained that had
he embraced Islam a few years ago, especially when he
resigned from the Government he might have been accused of
acting out of anger and frustration. \textit{But he hoped that now}

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such an imputation would not be laid against him for he had
taken the decision after due deliberation. In the same letter
Philby also complained that now his genuine aspirations were
frustrated in his native Britain while on the contrary he
was warmly welcome by Ibn Saud and his people in Saudi
Arabia. At the end of the letter he declared that his decision
was well considered and final.

Any way the deed is finally and
irrevocably done, and I shall die
in perfect equanimity in the
Muslim faith for which (especially
on its ethical side) I have a
very real admiration.

Apparently Philby seems to have been impressed by
the ethical aspect of Islam and that he was more concerned
with its political aspect, most especially with the political
future and greatness of Ibn Saud’s Kingdom than anything
else. This gives credence to Monroe’s charge that his accepta-
ance of Islam was not a result of some spiritual crisis that
he was confronted with but he did so for reasons purely
ethical, political and material. However, whatever may
have been the motivations behind his conversion, material
or spiritual, once he adopted the religion of Islam he
stood by it till his final breath. Quite understandably

1. Ibid.
his conversion brought him closer to the Arab people. He now identified himself with the Arab nation, their Islamic culture and civilization, and shared their hopes and aspirations for political independence and regarded their achievements and failures as his own.

Philby's writings, especially his travel books which he produced both in his pre and post conversion life are rich in the sense that they mirror cultural and socio-religious conditions of the Arabian peninsula of the first half of the twentieth century. Especially his two books - *The Heart of Arabia* (two volumes) and *The Arabia of the Wahhabis*, which were written before his conversion, reflect very clearly the Arab realities but according to the vision with which Philby saw them during his journeys in Najd in 1917-1918. In these travelogues Philby seems to be concerned with a variety of subjects, but more particularly he deals with the living realities of the then Arabian society. It is this aspect of his travel books that merits a thorough and comprehensive study.

**Islam** In his travelogues Philby frequently refers to Islam, the religion believed and practised by the Arabs. As his works were written in two phases of his life, Christian and Islamic, naturally they are divided into two kinds reflecting two different attitudes. The first may be described
as one of interest and the other as one of indifference. In his pre-conversion works he seems taking interest in the subject of Islam and his attitude towards it is sometimes objective and sometimes negative. That he has meticulously and objectively described certain aspects of Islam as understood and practised by the followers of Muhammad Ibn Abd al Wahhab. But on many occasions, as will be seen later on, his attitude or approach appears to have been highly negative.

As far Philby's post conversion travelogues are concerned he seems to have deliberately maintained an attitude of indifference. That he does consciously avoid any reference to Islam which might be regarded as negative or derogatory. As a result his post-conversion travelogues, with the sole exception of A Pilgrims in Arabia are little or not at all concerned with the religion of Islam. It is, therefore, reasonable to discuss his overall attitude towards Islam, as reflected especially in his travelogues, without dividing it into two: One of his pre-conversion and the other of his post-conversion life.

Philby was a prolific writer and produced many books about Arabia. However, throughout his long academic career he did not produce even a single intellectual and academic work that specifically dealt with Islamic thought, its belief
system and ethics. In fact it is mainly in his travel books that he wrote about the Islamic faith. His travelogues, as can be ascertained from the above discussion, do not present a completely disfigured picture of Arab realities, nor are blindly hostile towards the Arab people, their religion and aspirations for independence and progress. In fact his narrative of his experiences in Arabia, as mentioned above, is objective in many respects. But it does not mean that his works are completely free from subjectivity and contain no ill-will towards the Arabs and their religion. Despite a great deal of objectivity that he successfully maintained in all his works, travelogues or serious books, his outlook was still ethnocentric and European, if not Christian. He seems to be obsessed with a sense of belonging to the superior culture and civilization of the West. Naturally his superiority complex not only affected, here and there, his objectivity but also prejudiced his judgements on many counts. Moreover, this sense of belonging to the Christian West was aroused, rather heightened to the maximum when he felt that it was threatened by a strange culture. While travelling with the 'Wahhabee fanatics' in Najd, many of whom openly expressed their dislike of him for being a Christian infidel, Philby intensely felt that his British self and Christian identity were under a serious threat.
I had scarcely been conscious of the fatigue and worry which had accompanied my task in a land of fanatics who, by studied aversion and often by unconcealed expression of their hatred of the infidel in their midst, had made my life a lonely and depressing one. (1)

The so-called 'Wahhābe fanaticism' not only made him feel alienated but also helped him regain his Christian identity which he had forgotten since his days at Cambridge. His resurrected Christian identity prompted him even to speak like an over zealous Christian missionary.

Irresistably my thoughts carried me back over nineteen hundred years and more to just such a scene (a Christmas occasion which he celebrated among the Bedouins) as this, when simple herding folk received the first tidings of an event destined to change the history of the world. Should one come this night with word that Isa Ibn Miryam had returned to earth to gather the true believers to their God, the Ataiba shepherd folk would arise.

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and follow him, believing and
fearing not. (1)

Excessive missionary zeal, whether in a Christian
or in the followers of any other faith, makes its upholder
look down upon the faith of other people. So happened with
philby. His resurrected and revitalized Christianity forced
him to raise objections and pass unsavoury remarks on Islam.
In doing so he showed little regard for fair justice. In a
balanced criticism the views and arguments of the opposite
side which they might offer in defence of their position
are duly taken into account. On the contrary in a lop-sided
criticism this basic principle is completely ignored, hence
it amounts to a one sided speech, a monologue which bothers
not about the opponents' stand and thus involves the risk
of verging on folly. Such follies and superficial remarks
about Islam and its various tenets and practices are recurrent
in Philby's early works:

It was a winter month that the
Prophet, perhaps scarcely
conscious of the inherent defects
of the lunar calendar, selected
for the first Ramdhan. It
was moreover for Arabia that
he legislated, little realizing

perhaps that his creed would ever penetrate beyond its frontiers, but certainly ignorant that the span of day light differed at different latitudes.\(^{(1)}\)

'He legislated' clearly implies that Islam according to Philby, was not a divine religion. Apparently he subscribes to the common Christian stand that Muhammad was not a real prophet but a cunning impostor. But even more erroneous is his assertion that the Prophet had no idea and foresight if his teachings would ever cross the frontiers of Arabian peninsula. For scholars well versed in Islamic history and traditions are fully aware of the fact that long before the virtual fall of the Roman and Persian empires the Prophet Muhammad had prophesied of their conquest by his followers. Moreover, had Philby made a serious attempt to comprehend the message of the Prophet he would have fully realized that Islam by its nature was incapable of being confined in boundaries. It is a universalist and missionary religion, hence bound to transcend all frontiers, geographical, religious and cultural.

Philby's remark that the Prophet Muhammad was unaware of the 'inherent defects of the lunar calendar' is equally

\(^{(1)}\) Philby, *Arabia of the Wahhabis*, op. cit. P. I.
erroneous and smacks of typical Western prejudice against things oriental. The West scarcely blames itself for its failure and inability to understand the East. On the contrary it condemns the East of being intricate and incomprehensible.

Infact this attitude or mentality stems directly from the superiority complex that the West has always been obsessed with. Philby, though a bitter critic of many Western ideals, was a victim of this common Western malady. As a result he failed to see the benefits inherent in the lunar calendar, especially in the case of fasting. Since the span of daylight is different at various latitudes it is possible only in this system that the people of various regions would not enjoy the blessings or suffer the hardship of the seasons permanently. And above all Philby ought to have understood that religion is not a mathematical calculation but a spiritual experience and moral obligation.

Blind hostility knows no end and can go to any extent. Philby, after having once subjected the Prophet to his bitter criticism seems determined to spare no opportunity that came his way to downgrade and belittle his personality. He even tried to malign and disfigure his personality through indirect comments. For instance in a passage to be quoted
shortly he stereotyped the Kinsmen of the Prophet whom he called a 'Primitive' savage race but the target of his ridicule and criticism was the Prophet himself. In fact a traveller is a highly privileged personality. He describes in his travelogues what he and in many cases only he sees and comes across. For a common man it is difficult, even beyond his capacity, to confirm his accounts which not unoften amount to sinister stereotypes from reliable sources. The poisonous effect of such stereotypes and impudent portrayal on a lay readership can be easily imagined. The following passage falls in the same category of stereotype:

Arabs they doubtless are, but with little in common with the nomads of the desert, with their coarse features, their wild hair and bridge-less noses, they seemed to me to be of some primitive savage race descending unregenerated by mixture with higher types from the remotest antiquity, and these are the Quraish, the Kinsmen of the Prophet.\(^1\)

Occasionally Philby seems to be highly impressed by the simplicity of Ibn Saud's creed, his hospitality and

\(^1\) Philby, *The Heart of Arabia* (Vol. I) op. cit. P. 203.
generosity and admires his efficient administration that enabled him to give both religious and political leadership to his people. But in his discussions with Ibn Saud, his companions and the governors of his various provinces he frequently makes a mockery of their religious zeal, political inexperience, their ignorance of modern science and their poor knowledge of the world. For example he narrates in a ridiculous manner that Ibn Saud, the Amir of the Najdi Arabs was ignorant of the fact that the Americans were of English stock and spoke the English language. The King as well as his people still believed that America was inhabited by the Red Indians. Philby revealed to Ibn Saud that how the Red Indians were subdued by European especially British immigrants and asked if there was any mention of the American continent in the Holy Quran. A companion of the King replied in affirmative. Philby ridiculed him saying that how it could be possible for the said continent had not been discovered in the time of the Prophet to whom the Quran was revealed. However, Ibn Saud came to Ahmad's rescue and said 'God knows everything and the Quran is His Word'. Philby was not convinced by Ibn Saud's answer.

Philby narrates another incident as yet another example of Ibn Saud's ignorance in a similar mocking tone:

"Do you know, I asked, that you can reach America both by travelling westward and travelling eastward? Ibn Saud was puzzled, but Ahmad reminded him of the 'Kurriyat' or 'orbicularity' of the earth, though even that failed to satisfy him or my complete sanity." (1)

However, sometimes Philby engaged in serious conversations and discussed various subjects with Ibn Saud and other Arab notables. These discussions, to some extent, reflect the socio-religious and cultural realities of Arabia as they existed in Ibn Saud's time.

There is no denying the fact that in a truly Islamic society free mixing of men and women is not permissible. However, the fair sex has full right to education and can freely engage in all kinds of intellectual pursuit. But in Wahhabee Arabia which proclaimed to be truly Islamic, women were not allowed to enjoy this fundamental right. Philby laments that they were thrown behind the closed doors 'without education or training for the service of society.' (2)

1. Ibid.
2. Ibid. p. 255.
The condition of Arabian women, according to Philby's perception, was pathetic and lamentable on several other scores. For example polygamy and divorce, both abominable and greatly detested in the West in the early years of the running century were widely practised in Arabia. Philby often discussed these issues with Arab notables including Ibn Saud. Understandably he presents their arguments and his own counter-arguments in a way which tend to substantiate his stand on the one hand and put the Arabs on defensive on the other. A remarkable feature of these discussions which Philby has recorded in his works is that while he himself felt at liberty to pass a sweeping remark on Arab culture and criticise their socio-religious norms he asked for concrete evidence if any of his Arab hosts ever ventured to make a generalized comment on English society and their social customs. For instance when a certain Dr. Abdullah remarked that at least ten percent Englishmen practised bigamy Philby asked him to give a concrete evidence and when his host failed to do so he forced him to take back his words. But when he himself alleged that fornication, adultery and many other social evils were common in Najdi society he felt no need to offer any evidence but did so on the petty pretext that he was told so and so by unknown Arabs. (1)

Philby's objection to the practice of polygamy and divorce was not new but a reflection of age-old and common also European outlook. However, it is clear from the discussions recorded in his works that his Arab hosts were intellectually incompetent to satisfy his questioning mind in a rational way. For example Dr. Abdullah, instead of explaining that in what circumstance and with what conditions and restrictions the Islamic law allows the practice of polygamy, tried to justify it in the following manner:

Europe's losses of men during the War would compel her to abandon her monogamous basis both in order to make good the actual deficiency in the population and also in fairness to the women otherwise deprived of all chance of marriage. (1)

Philby's doubts were not to be removed by such hypothetical arguments. Instead he felt emboldened to raise objections against many other Islamic practices. Some lax Wahhabees of his time also strengthened his belief that Islam was hardly compatible with the modern age. He has described at length that how some Wahhabees used to malign the image of the Islamic law by their silly and foolish action. For instance he has cited the case of a certain Ibn Maiman who was very old and had two old wives. As

1. Ibid.
it was not enough he decided to have a third wife and married a pretty young girl. The new wife immediately asserted herself and forced Ibn Maiman to divorce his two old wives. As a result the two women were divorced and thrown out of the house without having been provided with any provision to spend their life comfortably. Often such divorced women, as Philby has noted, were taken care of by their sons or other close relatives. But if they were not fortunate enough as to have obedient sons and responsible relatives they had to face a miserable future. Probably it were Philby's such experiences which prompted him to raise objections against the Islamic law of marriage and divorce.\(^\text{1}\)

It is also pertinent to note that Philby's understanding of the Islamic law of marriage and divorce was pitifully poor. In his defence it might be said that his understanding of the Islamic law was not based on a study of some relevant scholarly treatise but he had come to know them, as mentioned above, from the Wahhabee way of living and their observance of Islam. Indeed, if one is ready to believe Philby's accounts, it appears that he was led to form a poor opinion of the Islamic law by Ibn Saud himself. According to Philby once Ibn Saud argued with him in the following manner which clearly suggested that the Islamic

law of marriage and divorce was lax and irrational.

'Why is it', asked Ibn Saud, 'that you English allow divorce to be so difficult? Among us when a wife no longer pleases we get rid of her by thrice repeating a simple word, taliq, taliq, taliq, that is enough, Wallah, in my life time I have married five and seventy wives and, Inshallah, I have not done with wedding yet, I am yet young and strong. And now with the great losses caused by the War assuredly the time will come when the people of Europe shall take more wives than one. (1)

This was obviously a travestical interpretation of the Islamic law which might be considered as Ibn Saud's personal opinion. However, it must have made a bad impression on Philby's mind who belonged to a monogamous society. Nevertheless Philby appreciates Ibn Saud for taking proper care of his divorced wives. Intact according to royal tradition those of the divorcees who bore him children were entitled to special consideration. They were provided with provisions and facilities to lead a somewhat happier

life. Moreover, they had to bring up the royal children and were not married away to other men as was the case with the childless divorcees of the King.\(^1\)

According to Philby other practices of Ibn Saud pertaining to marriage and divorce were equally disgusting. Usually he would have three wives at a time and 'keep the fourth vacancy open to be filled temporarily by any girl to whom he may take a fancy during his expeditions abroad.'\(^2\) Such marriages did not last long and were broken at his convenience. Often a newly married girl was returned back to her parents with gift and provisions when he needed her no longer.

Although Philby had some misconceptions in his mind either under the influence of age old prejudices against Islam or because he was led to do so by some silly Wahhabee traditions, it is, however, crystal clear that he had a keen desire to understand at least the Najdi society.

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1. See Ibid.

2. Ibid. It might be pertinent here to note that in the Arabian tribal society it was a common practice to establish a political bond between two tribes through mutual marriages. It was regarded as highly immoral and disgraceful to break such a bond by waging war or rising in rebellion against the person concerned. Perhaps it will be appropriate to conclude that some of Ibn Saud's marriages were of this nature and were conducted to serve one or another political purpose.
and the pristine form of Islam they claimed to practise at the time of his journey. Moreover, he observed a good deal of objectivity while writing down some of his experiences in his works. Although his account of the Wahhabee creed is not free from errors his objectivity is beyond suspicion which must have greatly influenced the English readers for whose benefit he had primarily produced his travel books.

Salah or Islamic prayer Philby's objectivity is at its best when he describes the Wahhabee mode of prayer and other related practices. Minute and vivid description is especially remarkable. However, there are some mistakes in his accounts which will be pointed out in their proper place.

As well known Islamic prayer, the Salah in Arabic is prefaced by Adhan, the call to prayer. The Wahhabee formula of Adhan, says Philby, is identical with that of other sunnin schools except one additional phrase —La Ilaha Illa Allah — which the Wahhabees pronounce at the end of Adhan. (1) It is to be noted that this is not an additional phrase used by the Wahhabees alone but is an essential part of Adhan practised by all Sunni Schools.

Aahan is followed by Salah or the prayer. According to Philby the congregation assembles in a Masjid, a specific place where prayer is offered. The prayer is usually led by an Imam or the leader who is chosen either on account of his age or social standing or because of his religious knowledge. Philby is again wrong when he says that the second Aghan (Iqamah) ends at Qad Qamat al Salah (the prayer has begun)\(^1\). Infact this phrase is followed by two more phrases which imply oneness and greatness of Almighty God. These two phrases are proclaimed by all Sunni schools including the Wahhabees who basically follow the school of Ahmad Ibn Hanbal.

Philby's description of the Muslim prayer is remarkably minute and meticulous. But as mentioned earlier it does contain a number of mistakes or things which might mislead a layman. For example about the end of the sunset prayer (Magrib) he writes.

The sunset prayer, which is almost identical with the Asha is gone through, and at its conclusion the Imam, first turning his head to the right and then to the left, repeats in each direction the formula, Salam Alaikum wa rahmatallah. There follows a slight pause and a general clearing of throats.\(^2\)

2. Ibid.
In a similar manner Philby writes that at the end of the *Isha* prayer also people used to murmur and then recite the ninety nine attributes of God. The way Philby describes all these, almost in the same breath, one may get the impression, especially those who are not well versed in Islamic theology, that even throat clearing or whatever follows the *Salam* that marks the end of the prayer are essential part of Muslim prayer. It also needs to be clarified that even the attributes of God which many prayer-sayers recite silently after the *Salam* are not a part of the prayer. However, there is no denying the fact that it has a religious significance and is done in accordance with the *Sunnah* or practice of the Prophet.

Philby rightly says that the Wahhabee prayer is almost identical or in consonance with that of other Sunni Muslims. But some of his observations are highly ridiculous and reflect a typical attitude of travellers who generally accept things at their face value and do not realize that one or two incidents that they have come across, may be, instead of being common, might have been rare individual acts. For example once or twice he saw a few individuals who suddenly rose from their prostration and ran after an unruly camel to bring him back to his proper place, and then returned to the prayer without any
hesitation as there had occurred no interruption. Philby took such rare incidents as typical of all the Wahhabees and, as a result, made an erroneous comment that the Wahhabee prayers are conspicuous by absence of 'empty formalities' and of single hearted concentration, things generally 'left to individual predilections'. Equally incorrect is his remark that haste, inattention, lack of devotion and other deviations of the kind are immaterial in Islamic worships and prayers. (1)

However, Philby has described some other aspects of the prayer with considerable insight and accuracy. 'When journeying,' he writes, 'they are permitted from motives of convenience to telescope the five appointed times of prayer into three, but not thereby to shorten... the prayers themselves.' (2) Philby has, however, not elaborated whether the number of Rakat is reduced by the Wahhabees or not. By Taqsir he understands that a traveller can unite Zuhr and Asr, the midday and afternoon prayers respectively, at a time roughly midway between the two or at some time before the later (Asr) prayer. Likewise he can unite the Maghrib and the Isha at a time immediately after the sun sinks below the horizon or at a time, as

2. Ibid. P. 251.
some stricter Wahhabees insist, when the light attributable to the sun becomes completely invisible. As far the dawn prayer (Fajr) is concerned it will be said at its usual hour, whether the prayer-sayer is at home or in a state of journey. (1)

The Wahhabees of the northern Najd, according to Philby, differed from those living in the south on certain matters. For example in southern Najd the Adhan or call to Maghrib prayer was proclaimed immediately after the sunset and for the morning prayer well before the sun was risen. However, in northern Najd the practice was slightly different; the morning call was proclaimed just before the actual dawn or at a time when the sun is near to rise, and the sunset call well after the sunset when every vestige of the Sun's light became invisible. (2) Philby says that the northern Wahhabees considered their southern coreligionists as having deviated from the right course of things. They viewed strict time keeping as being very important in matter of prayers. They were further disgusted with their southern brothers on the question of Qadha (making good an omission to pray at the correct moment). According to them Qadha was permissible only when it was caused by no mistake of the individual concerned. It is not meant for those

1. See Ibid,
people who deliberately avoid to say prayers at their specified time. These squabblings, according to Philby, were in fact the beginning of 'theological hair splitting among the simple Arabs of the desert'.

Ramadhan or the Month of Fasting: besides the prayer Philby has also dealt with various aspects of Ramadhan, the holy month of fasting. His narrative of the holy month like that of the Salat or prayer is minute, objective and reflects his keen power of observation, understanding and insight into various Wahhabi practices. Remarkably his narrative in this regard is free from egregious mistakes. Moreover, he is not merely concerned with theological aspects of the holy month but also he is keenly desirous of knowing that what the Wahhabis do or what special prayers they say in order to achieve spiritual cleanliness and success. Viewed in this perspective his narrative of the holy month seems to have become a mirror of the socio-religious realities of the then Najdi society.

Philby rightly observes that Ramadhan occupies a prominent place in Wahhabi scheme of things. It is as important for them as the Passover to the Jews or Lent to the followers of Christianity. A fast, as Philby rightly defines, is to abstain from eating drinking, smoking and to avoid sexual

1. Ibid.
intercourse. He further opines that the Wahhabees are in agreement with the Muslims of other schools regarding the above matters. However, they, according to philby, differ from other Muslims in the sense that they strictly observe all precepts related with the holy month. Even in the hottest days when the midday's scorching sun makes it almost impossible to perform even normal works, they, instead of sleeping and taking rest, prefer to say additional prayers, contemplate and recite verses of the Holy Quran. Most especially they manifest extraordinary religious fervour in the last ten days of the holy month in order to be fortunate enough to find and subsequently spend in prayer the Lailat al Qadr, the Night of Glory which is better than a thousand months. (1)

Ramadhan is a special month of prayer and its all days and nights are vitally important in the eyes of all Muslims including the Wahhabees. But the final ten days, especially the nights of the odd dates are religiously more significant than others. For any of the five odd nights may happen to be the Night of Glory. Here Philby appears to be a typical Western Christian whose view of the Prophet Muhammad is highly prejudiced and as a result he passed a derogatory comment on his personality. He wrongly thinks that Muhammad could not exactly specify the Night of Glory because he was not able or competent to do it. Philby perhaps wanted to

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1. See, Philby, Arabia of the Wahhabis, op. cit. p. 3.
suggest that the last messenger, unlike Muslims' clear claim, was not inspired by God, received no revelation from Him and that he was not a prophet in the class of Jesus and other biblical prophets. Had he been so he must have specified the exact date. Whatever the reason it shows Philby's disrespect and prejudice against the Prophet. In fact if one studies carefully the sayings and traditions of the prophet which deal with this subject, the Night of Glory, he would come to a definite conclusion that the purpose of leaving the date unspecified was not to keep the believers in suspense but to encourage them to say additional prayers in order to attain consummate spirituality and win the favour of God. Perhaps the Wahhabees of Najd understood this point very well. The uncertainty pertaining to the exact date of the Night of Glory meant more prayers and more worship for them. Because this uncertainty is rendered even more uncertain, especially in view of the fact that every month in the lunar calendar begins with the actual sight of the moon. And it is common knowledge that occasionally the sighting of the moon becomes very difficult, even impossible either due to bad weather or because of some other reasons. It means there is always a possibility of an error regarding the actual day of the beginning of a lunar month. In plain words it is quite possible that the twentieth in actual fact is twenty first or the vice versa. In such a situation one can not be sure
of the exact date of the Night of Glory which may fall in any of the odd nights of the last ten days. Keeping this possibility of error or uncertainty in view the Wahhabees spend rigorously all the nights in prayer and other religious exercises from twentieth of the month to its end. It ensures that they will not miss the Night of Glory any way.\(^1\)

The Wahhabees spent in prayer not only nights but also devoted a considerable portion of the day to various kinds of religious services. During the whole month of Ramadhan every 'Wahhabee day', according to Philby, was marked besides regular prayers, by meditation and extensive reading of the Holy Quran. He cites the example of a certain Abd al Rahman who had made it a habit to recite the Holy Quran as many as thirty times in as many days. Even Ibn Saud who being ruler of his country had to attend to the affairs of the State was often able and fortunate enough to make at least four or five reading of the whole Quran. These rigorous and strenuous religious services of the Wahhabees, according to Philby, were in fact a test of their fortitude and capacity, both moral and physical, to suffer and endure. Endurance, in his view, is a great quality and the month of Ramadhan gives it to those fortunate people who observe it. Philby rightly observes

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\(^1\) See Ibid. p. 4.
that since the purpose of the great fast is spiritual edification or purification of soul it is believed by the Wahhabees that only abstinence from eating and drinking would not work. Rather it should be accompanied by extensive religious services such as recitation of the Holy Qur'an, additional prayers besides the regular ones and by a total distraction from all bad habits, evil deeds and wickedness.\(^1\)

Philby has given a full length account of other practices related with the great fast of Ramadhan such as Suhur, Iftar, Tarawih and *Qiyam* etcetera. The Wahhabees, according to Philby, woke up well before the time prescribed for Suhur (pre-dawn meal). This extra period was usually utilized to say 'private' prayers (probably *Tahajjud*). After this, that is, before the true dawn (*al Fajr al Sa'ig*) they used to take Suhur as enjoined by the Prophet and went on doing so until the call for morning prayer was proclaimed from the minarets of various mosques. The Adhan as usual was followed by the morning prayer.

The prescribed time for Iftar, the breaking of the fast was sunset Adhan or the call to Maghrib prayer. A great majority of the Wahhabees, according to Philby, broke their fast at hearing the very first sound of the Adhan. However, some people did so only when the Adhan was over.\(^2\)

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1. See Ibid. p. 5.
2. See Philby, *The Heart of Arabia* (Vol.II) op. cit. p. 25C.
were also some differences between the Shias, known as Rafichee in Najd, and the Wahhabees regarding the exact timing of the call for *Maghrib* prayer. According to Philby the Shias proclaimed the *Adhan* only after the appearance of the first star on the horizon but the Wahhabees did so immediately after the sunset or when the last vestige attributable to the sun disappeared.

Philby has not mentioned that how the common people used to break their fast. The regular practice with Ibn Saud, however, was to repair to the roof of the private apartments of the palace, where he would be joined by various members of the royal family. Thus assembled they would await the first sound of the *Adhan* announcing sunset, each man holding a date between his forefinger and thumb while repeating the phrase *Astaghfir Allah* again and again in accordance with the practice and precepts of the Prophet(1).

Water, date and sliced melons, interalia, were the usual items of the royal *Iftar*. Immediately after the

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Iftar the sunset prayer was said.

The evening prayer (Isha) was usually said when the night was gone over an hour. The Isha prayer was followed by Trawih, a special supplication or a further course of service. In the last ten nights of Ramadhan, Trawih, after a short interval, was followed by the Qiyam or the resurrection prayer as Philby called it. The Qiyam in fact marks the culmination of the holy month. This special prayer was said through the whole night until the time came for Suhur. The Qiyam, according to Philby, was not an easy service, but an exhausting one. The inclinations and prostrations along with prolonged standing in this service are terribly long which all men, especially the weak and the old, find very difficult to bear. Hence, keeping in view the human frailty and weakness a few short intervals were observed in which the participants were provided with light refreshments such as tea and coffee within the precincts of the mosque.

The long 'ordeal' of Ramadhan, as Philby put it, comes to an end with the sighting of moon for Id al Fitr, which is a kind of thanks giving celebration. Id is a day of happiness and rejoicing, and fasting on this day, according to the Islamic Shariah, is not permissible. However, after the Id day one may observe six additional fasts as the Prophet and his companions used to do it. 'It is held,' writes Philby, 'that those whose
fortitude is equal to this extra penance are practically assured of admission into paradise in due course'(1)

Philby accepted Islam in 1930 and from then onward he was very particular in following its various precepts especially when he used to live in Arabia. He was, however, little concerned with things spiritual and wrote rarely on spiritual aspect of Islam. Even in his book *A Pilgrim in Arabia* which is a record of the holy pilgrimage, he talks only of the spiritual experiences of other people and gives no hint if he himself underwent any such experience. For example he saw people thoroughly busy in various religious services such as prayer, meditation, recitation of the Quran and often found them weeping out of the fear of God and asking His favour and forgiveness. Moreover, once he found an opportunity to spend a night in the royal camp. Soon he was asleep. He, however, woke up around middle of the night and discovered, to his surprise, that Ibn Saud was engrossed in prayer.(2) But these extraordinary religious and spiritual scenes seem to have aroused no such feeling in his heart. He was seemingly content with performing only the prescribed rituals of the pilgrimage.

Although it is not a part of the pilgrimage most pilgrims go to the holy city of Madinah to pay

1. Ibid., p. 14.
their homage to the Prophet. The Green Dome of the Prophet is special attraction of the holy pilgrims. Moreover, they feel privileged to say prayers in the Grand Mosque of the prophet which is located in the sacred city. The scene in and around the Mosque is very moving. For the memory of every pilgrim is taken back to those glorious moments of history when his beloved Prophet was alive, struggling day and night against the widely prevalent ignorance of his time and happily suffering mental and physical ordeals to save humanity from falling in the deadly pit of Hell. Naturally his heart is moved and filled with love and devotion to the Prophet. He is thoroughly enraptured with great delights and undergoes an indescribable spiritual and emotional experience. But Philby’s accounts of the holy city are presented in such a way as he did not have any spiritual experience and had no special love for the Prophet. It also speaks of his general attitude towards things spiritual.

However, Philby has described the Haj rituals with amazing accuracy. Infact, after embracing Islam he had made a thorough study of Islam, its various aspects including the Haj. It placed him in a good position to write a travel book entitled: A Pilgrim in Arabia which, unlike the accounts of Christian travellers, is unprejudiced and free from glaring errors. Moreover, he used his first hand knowledge
to serve his newly adopted faith. For example once when he was speaking before an English audience in London he tried to correct a 'Strange error so common among novelists and other fanciful writers, who so often represent the Muhammadans as turning daily in prayer towards the grave of their Prophet at Mecca. As you all know, it is the House of God at Mecca they face at prayer time and not the Prophet's grave at Madina'.

Besides the prayers, the holy pilgrimage and the fast of Ramadhan Philby has also dealt with the Wahhabee attitude towards religious books and their practice to listen to reading either from traditional literature or from the Holy Quran after every evening or Isha prayer. The passages selected for such readings usually dealt with the pangs and torments that the sinners were to suffer in the life hereafter. Philby has also written that the Hanbali school of thought which the Wahhabees follow considered only two commentaries of the Holy Quran as authentic: Tafsir Ibn Kathir and Al Baghawi which were in twelve and six volumes respectively. Philby further says that the Wahhabee position on the succession of persons who are entitled to interpret the divine law is as follows: first the Prophet himself, second the Sahaba or the Prophet's companions, third alTabi'in

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or the associates of the Prophet's companions and finally Tab'e Tabi'in, that is, the associates of the associates of the Prophet's companions. Ahmad Ibn Hanbal whose school of thought is followed by the Wahhabees was of the last category. (1)

Philby has also written about Ibn Saud's exposition of the true Islamic faith which in his opinion remained unchanged or unadulterated in the first three centuries of the Hijra calendar. However, in the next thousand years Islam, according to Ibn Saud, was polluted as a number of heresies were included in it. The purpose of Wahhabism was to eradicate all innovations like paying visit to the tombs of the Saints in order to seek their intercession with God either to find salvation or to fulfil some worldly needs.

As is evident from the above discussion Philby wrote extensively about Wahhabism and various Wahhabee practices, religious, social or cultural. But surprisingly no where in his works he dealt with the main tenets of the Wahhabee movement as explained by Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, the intellectual founder of the movement. Even in his book Arabia which deals, interalia, with ups and downs of the Wahhabee movement that

1. See, Philby, Arabia of the Wahhabis, op. cit. p. 16.
it witnessed at various junctures of its history he refers only in passing to the principles and teachings that Ibn Abd al Wahhab upheld and preached. For instance the above mentioned book contains a short statement which was in fact made by a delegation deputed by Ibn Abd al Wahhab himself to the Meccan ecclesiastics in order to clear his position and explain the message and philosophy of his reform movement. The statement is quoted here in full:

The imputation of heresy to us (the Wahhabis) is a subterfuge and a calumny against us, while the destruction of domes is an act of piety and virtue, as is recorded by other writers and not challenged or questioned by the learned, and the learned Imams (i.e. the Imams of the four orthodox schools of Sunni Islam) have given their verdict on recourse to the Saints for the purpose of intercession, and have condemned those who do so as guilty of infidelity, and no one maintains that it is right except ignorant infidels. (1)

Obviously it is merely a statement of faith and does

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not sufficiently explain that what Wahhabism really means? Philby ought to have studied all the works of Ibn Abdal Wahhab in order to discuss the Wahhabee movement in detail. Had he done so, he would have been able to present a more illuminating, as well as interesting, study of the Wahhabee sect and the society that he saw during his journeys in various parts of Najd in central and eastern Arabia.

Philby in Iraq Although a civil servant hence a pillar of the British Empire Philby, as will become evident from the ensuing discussion, often opposed his country's imperial policies. There is no denying the fact that in the early days of his service in Mesopotamia he was basically a government of India man and believed in the virtue of Britain's imperial administration. However, after his meeting with Ibn Saud in late 1917 his ideas began to change. When in Iraq he had hardly met an Arab of exceptional character, ability and strength, authoritative and ambitious enough to impress upon his mind that the Arabs were competent as well as prepared to rule themselves without foreign interference. But his desert adventure of 1917-18 brought him into contact with the Arabs who were born and brought up in an atmosphere of freedom and were able to run their show without foreign help. He was especially impressed by Ibn Saud whom he later
described as 'beyond all price.' In Ibn Saud's charming and powerful personality he found an ideal Arab who, in his earnest opinion, had the ability to give a dynamic and able leadership to the Arabs.

Philby was in such a state of mind when in November 1918 France and Britain issued a statement about their future policy in respect of the Arab territories occupied by the Allied forces. The statement which later became known as Anglo-French Declaration was aimed at allaying the Arab fear that the governments of Britain and France intended to establish their imperial rule in Iraq and Syria respectively. It further promised that future governments in Arab countries will be formed by the free choice of native people which in fact was a clear cut promise for Arabs' right to self determination. Philby was particularly happy with the declaration and became rather over optimistic about its consequence, for it not only tallied with but also stimulated his newly acquired ideas about Arab independence. This so-called Anglo-French Declaration later became the bedrock of Philby's bitter but well founded criticism of Europe's imperial designs on the Arab world.

The Anglo-French Declaration was in fact a meaningless document and was never intended to be fully implemented. This is the reason that the British Government continued with its imperial policies in Iraq ignoring the Arab desire for independence, a wrong decision for which they later paid dearly. Because in 1920 the Iraqi people rose in rebellion against the British occupation of their country. The rebellion was quelled at a heavy cost. But it forced the British policy makers in the Whitehall to adopt a new policy. As a result Sir Percy Cox was recalled from Iran to replace Arnold Wilson. Cox, an admirer of Philby's great energies invited him to join his staff.

The new British policy was to grant semi-independence to the Iraqi people. Cox, Philby and Gertrude Bell 'in perfect union and harmony' devised a system in accordance with the new policy. The idea was to 'set up in Baghdad a provisional Government that would meet with universal approval and acceptance'.

The Provisional Government was to work with the help of a Council of Ministers. It was decided that suitable as well as amenable Iraqis will be selected for various ministries and that every minister will be assisted by a competent British adviser. The role of the advisers was

clearly defined as only to give advice, when needed, to the ministers and not to run the country. It appears that Philby in full collaboration with Cox and Miss Bell, was determined to prove that Wilson's policies were thoroughly wrong.

In fact Wilson was a pure imperialist and was not happy with the Anglo-French Declaration. He, after hearing the news of the Declaration, had contemplated to set up only city councils in which the elected Iraqis were to be allowed to discuss but to have no right to vote or take a decision. For he believed that the Iraqis were yet unprepared for self rule and incapable of managing their affairs without Britain's imperial presence. But on the contrary Philby had quite liberal views and believed that the inhabitants of Iraq should be allowed to run their show independently. In his opinion the only role left for the so-called advanced Britain was to help the Iraqis in their new role.

Cox shared some of Philby's liberal ideas for the time being. His main problem, however, was to find out suitable Iraqis for various ministeries and to pick up wise British advisers to help them in administering the affairs of the country. Moreover he had to prepare a set of guidelines that were needed to maintain a balanced and working relationship between the Ministers and their advisers. Cox, with the help of Philby and Miss Bell, overcame these problems.
and at last set up a Council of Ministers with Syed Abd al Rahman, the Naqib of Baghdad as its first and last president. Syed Talib, an ambitious and shrewd politician, was appointed the Interior Minister with Philby as his adviser. Philby soon started to couch him in right ideas.

The main task for which the Provisional Government was set up was to draft an electoral law for holding general election in the country. After much discussion, arguments and controversies the Naqib Government was able to pass such a law and sent it to the High Commissioner, Sir Percy Cox, for promulgation. But it could never be promulgated. Because Winston Churchill, along with Lawrence and other officers of the Colonial Office, was thinking on quite a different line. Infact their intention was to install Faisal King of Iraq.

However, most Iraqis, according to Philby, were against the installation of a puppet Hashemite Kingdom in their country. Philby was also against Faisal's installation in Iraq. The success of the Provisional Government under the Naqib of Baghdad had further strengthened his long cherished idea that the people of Iraq, if given a chance and properly couched in right ideas, will ably run their own independent government. It was in this perspective
that he, more than any other British adviser, had assured the Naqib of Baghdad and Syed Talib who were naturally perturbed at hearing the news of Faisal's installation that Britain had no intention to impose its own man on Iraq and that she sincerely wanted to give a chance to the people of Iraq to decide their destiny. It had not occurred to him even in his wildest dream that Britain would break its word and betray him as well as the Arabs' good faith. Naturally he was upset when he learned that the Cairo Conference (held in 1921) had decided to install Faisal in Iraq ignoring the Anglo-French Declaration which had promised the Arabs the right to self-determination.

The news of Faisal's installation caused personal frustration as well. Since his meeting with the Wahhabee monarch, Ibn Saud, in 1917 he had been constantly thinking of an independent Arab government. While working in Iraq as an adviser to the Provisional Government he had often thought that circumstances were probably favourable to realize his dream. But his aspirations were frustrated by the Cairo Conference. He upbraided his country for disregarding the Anglo-French Declaration and betraying a 'sacred trust for civilization.'

But imperialism has no respect for 'civilization' for the legitimate aspirations of the subject people. On
Cox's order Faisal was farcically elected King of Iraq. Philby refused to reconcile with the new arrangement and as a result had to go. He resigned in protest.

In Transjordan However, he was reemployed and sent to Transjordan as Chief British Representative in November 1921. His main task was to watch over the Amir Abdullah, prevent his spending spree, establish an independent and efficient administration and suppress nationalist elements who had come from Syria when the French dismantled Faisal. In a year's time he was able to bring back the country on the right track. The good performance of Abdullah's administration prompted the British Government to invite him to London in October 1922 where he was promised to be granted independence. The so-called 'document of independence,' however, was handed over to him by Herbet Samuel, the British High Commissioner for Palestine at a function in Amman in May 1923. The main points of the document, according to Philby, were as follows:

That His Majesty's Government, subject to the approval of the League of Nations, recognized the existence in Trans-Jordan of an independent administration under the Amir Abdullah,
provided that such administration
should be conducted on democratic
and constitutional lines, and should,
by an agreement to be negotiated
thereafter, place His Majesty's Government
in a position to discharge its international
obligations in respect of the
territory in question.(1)

Naturally Philby was happy and became rather sanguine
about the consequences of the so-called 'document of inde­
pendence'. But his happiness proved short lived. Gradually
Abdullah again became autocratic, tyrant and extravagant.
In keeping with the so-called 'document of independence'
which Philby regarded as a solemn declaration by the British,
and also in the interest of the Amir himself Philby advised
to convene a representative assembly by holding free election

1. Philby,'Trans-Jordan'in Central Asiatic Society
in the country. (1) He tried to convince Abdullah that such a representative Government, on the one hand, will help him run his administration effectively and, on the other, it will dispel the widespread impression that he (Philby) always collected on his rounds both among the wandering Bedouins and the sedentary city-dwellers that he (Abdullah) was merely a figurehead appointed by the Christian Britain to serve their purpose and that the old Turkish Government was preferable, not because it was good and effective but because it had not been subordinated to a Christian or any infidel power. He further explained to

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1. It is important to note that while Philby was encouraging Abdullah as well as doing his own bit to win the British support for the independence of Transjordan, he did also advise and encourage the Amir either to expel or suppress the activities of the Syrian nationalists who had sought refuge in Abdullah's country after the French dismantled Faisal and occupied their country in July 1920. These nationalists were of the view that all Arab countries should be freed from the clutches of European imperialism in order to run their independent governments. Philby who claimed to be a supporter of the Arab independence never encouraged or extended his support to the nationalist elements. He never explained that why he did so. However, there are two possible explanations. First, Philby perhaps did not agree with the aspirations of the nationalists who wanted complete freedom and were not satisfied with the idea of limited independence under nominal British control which he himself favoured. Second, he probably realized that the Syrian nationalists were mainly active for and interested in Syria's independence. Moreover, they were merely individuals and had little influence with the natives of Transjordan. Next they were an anathema to both, the British authorities in Palestine and the French Government in Syria. Philby perhaps thought that in the given circumstances his alliance with and encouragement of the Syrian nationalists would not be helpful to promote Transjordanian independence. For their presence in the country was bound to invite the wrath of the British authorities in Palestine who, he feared, might create obstacles in the way of Abdullah's independence.
to Abdullah that the convening of a representative and democratic government will benefit him greatly for it will gain the support and favour of those high-ranking British officers and politicians who matter most in respect of Britain's colonies in Asia and Africa.

But Abdullah was not in a mood to heed to Philby's advice. He went on enjoying his unrestricted and autocratic powers, without showing any desire to curtail it by convening a representative government in the country. His ministers and higher officials were also against the establishment of a democratic government in the country. For they feared that the elected representatives of people will deprive them of their lucrative services. Infact it were these ministers and officers who exploited Abdullah's weaknesses to the maximum in order to serve their personal interests. As a result the treasury of the country, in Philby's words, was 'robbed right and left'. Moreover, 'essential services were allowed to suffer by non-payment of the salaries of their personnel, Government's lands were distributed among the Amir's favourite Shaikhs without any corresponding advantage to the public exchequer, even private owners were expropriated for the benefit of those who coveted their holdings. Badawin Shaikhs were allowed to remain, in fact, immune from the payment of due taxes, while the poorer agricultural classes
and some of them are very poor indeed — were forced to pay not only current taxation, but all uncollected arrears of taxation dating back to 1918. (1)

It was not only Abdullah who committed mistakes every time but sometimes Philby also acted hastily and foolishly. On one such occasion when he learned that an ancient Byzantine basilica was destroyed on Abdullah's order he lost his composure, upbraided the Amir in strongest words and even declared that he was unfit to rule his country. The relations between the two became so tense that Herbert Samuel was forced to intervene. But to Philby's annoyance and chagrin he favoured Abdullah. Philby was intelligent enough to read the writing on the wall. Samuel's intervention in favour of Abdullah convinced him that the High Commissioner was a Zionist Jews and wanted to include Transjordan in the area of Jewish settlement. Realizing that he was no more needed either by Abdullah or by his Government he handed in his resignation in 1924. In a letter to Harold Dickson he explained his reasons for resigning from the Government service:

I have resigned this job for many, very many reasons, the chief of them is that I can no longer go on

working with the present High Commissioner who, being a Zionist Jew, can not hold the scales even between Zionist and Arab interests. Besides this, Abdullah has rather let me down by his personal extravagance, which is on such a scale that he is simply inviting interference, and getting it in full measure from H.M.G., which means the Zionist element. So I am off. \( ^{(1)} \)

Before leaving Transjordan Philby warned Abdullah that his (Philby's) successor, however friendly, will be infact his master. \( ^{(2)} \) His warning was proved right by the subsequent events. Cox who succeeded Philby soon realized that Abdullah was not only incompetent but also unmanagable. As a result he reported to his Government that the Amir was a 'disease which was rapidly destroying the country.' \( ^{(3)} \) Peake, a British officer was earlier asked to prepare a report on the history of Abdullah's administration. Peake's report had indicted Abdullah for many lapses. He had also stated that Abdullah was not a good and efficient administrator and opined that it was advisable to get rid of him on a suitable occasion. The British authorities knew that

Abdullah was due to visit the holy city of Mecca in June 1924 in order to perform the holy pilgrimage. They decided to warn the Amir when he was due to return back from the holy land. An ultimatum to this effect was duly drafted and delivered to him on August 14, 1924. In the ultimatum it was made clear that Abdullah would be allowed to enter the country and continue as its ruler only when he agreed with certain British demands such as military inspection and control, the expulsion of undesirables (nationalist elements), the conclusion of an extradition agreement with Syria and the abolition of the department of tribal administration. (1) Helpless and ejected, Abdullah conceded all the demands. It is clear that Cox, as Philby had predicted, was the real master and that the so-called independent Abdullah was merely a puppet ruler installed by the British to play their game.

His Political Ideas: After his resignation from the Government service in 1924 Philby became thoroughly engrossed in Arab as well as international politics, mainly through his speeches and writings. His outlook especially in respect of Arab politics was one of a devoted admirer and supporter of Ibn Saud. It is a fact that Ibn Saud had ably established peace in his volatile desert country where chaos and anarchy were order of the day before his emergence on the scene. In almost

1. Ibid. p. 84.
all his books which contain accounts of his travels in various parts of Arabia he paid glowing tributes to the Wahhabee monarch for his great contribution to the unity and integrity of his country. He even goes to the extent of saying that people beyond the Wahhabee dominion had also real respect and admiration for Ibn Saud because of his great achievements. For instance he was told in Hadhramaut whose inhabitants were somewhat content, though not happy, with the British Protectorate that they would accept with open hands Ibn Saud's cooperation to establish peace in their land. The inference, according to Philby, was obvious that the so-called British protection had failed to put an end to anarchy and disorder in Hadhramaut. In Philby's opinion it was only Ibn Saud who could bring peace to Hadhramaut as he had achieved it remarkably in his own country. (1)

As regards international politics Philby always, especially after his resignation from the Government service sided with and supported the cause of Arab independence against European, particularly British imperialism. His stand was based on the principle that every individual as well as nation is entitled to freedom. Independence in itself is an inestimable and priceless asset which is a matter of pride for all people

and is held in high esteem by every nation in the world. But in Philby's age or in the early years of this century imperialism, which aims at depriving individuals as well as nations of their freedom was in full swing in Asia and Africa. As an Arabophile Philby, however, was concerned with the presence, practice and effect of imperialism in the Arab world. He criticised all things and acts which tended to harm the cause of Arab independence.

It was, however, only after his resignation that Philby became a die-hard critic of Britain's imperial policies. Moreover, he also began to advocate the idea of complete Arab independence while earlier when he was in Government service he had conditioned it with British protection or wanted some kind of Anglo-Arab alliance in order to realize Arab aspiration for freedom.

The first target of Philby's criticism after his resignation was British as well as French mandate granted to them by the League of Nations which, in the absence of the United States, was under full control of the two imperialist powers. Philby's main charge was that the mandates were undesirable because they denied the Arabs their inalienable right to self determination. Moreover they deprived the Arab people of their national freedom which was promised to them in the Anglo-French Declaration of the eighth November,
1918. Philby's criticism, however, proved to be a cry in the wilderness and failed to convince and persuade the policy makers of his country to change their imperial policies and grant independence to the Arabs.

Philby never spared any opportunity that came his way to criticise British imperialism. And such opportunities were not rare to occur, especially at a time when Britain was determined to consolidate its imperial presence in the newly occupied Arab territories of Iraq, Jordan and Palestine. He had hardly finished his campaign against the mandates and Anglo-French betrayal of faith (which they had committed by refusing to implement their solemn declaration of eighth November), when in July 1925 the British Government annexed to Transjordan the districts of Aqaba and Maan which were a part of King Husain's Kingdom at the time of its fall to Ibn Saud. Infact when a conflict started between King Husain and Ibn Saud for domination in Arabia Great Britain categorically announced to follow a policy of neutrality. They also believed that Ibn Saud's irregular army will be annihilated by Husain's well trained soldiers, but they were greatly alarmed and consequently changed their policy when they realized that Ibn Saud, contrary to their expectation, would out play the Sherif and put an end to the Hashimite Kingdom in the Hijaz. The reason for Britain's volte face was not difficult to understand. In fact Transjordan was of vital importance for Britain
in order to safeguard its economic and strategic interests in the Suez Canal and Red Sea zone. But this was to be done effectively only when Transjordan had free access to the sea through the port of Aqaba. Britain saw no crooler when its two allies, Husain and Abdullah, were ruling over the Hijaz and Transjordan respectively. But the moment Ibn Saud, who was also a British ally but less amenable than the former two, threatened to bring down Husain's Kingdom, the British Government promptly decided to annex Aqaba and Maan so that the port of Aqaba will come under control of its reliable ally, Abdullah, the Amir of Transjordan. Ibn Saud protested to the British Government and refused to give his recognition to the British mandate in Palestine and Iraq, but it proved of no avail.

Philby was, however, quick to condemn the British Government and flooded the radical press in Britain with letters and articles in which he criticised the annexation as illegal. The core of his arguments was that the annexed districts, Maan and Aqaba, were a part of Husain's Kingdom when it fell to Ibn Saud, hence they belonged invariably to his country. In his opinion the British action was yet another example of aggression against a Near Nation.

Imperialism and expansionism are twin sisters. Once Britain took the decision to make imperialism the corner stone of its foreign policy it was natural for her to pursue a policy
of territorial expansion. Expansionism means to encroach on the legitimate rights and national independence of unprivileged people and to subject them to sheer economic exploitation and worst kind of political oppression. These were the realities that Philby witnessed during his travels in Hadhramaut, its valleys, towns and villages.

In fact in 1935 Philby had travelled in Shabwa which he considered as independent and out of the jurisdiction of the Aden Protectorate. But Britain, on the other hand, regarded it as its own territory. Philby, however, disputed their claim and competently exposed the weakness of their case.

In the first place he rightly questioned the legitimacy of the Aden Protectorates Order of 1937 that enabled Britain to encroach upon the territories which were originally included in the area where an independent Arab state was to be established as defined in the Husain-McMahon correspondence. In fact the Aden Protectorate was stretched over an area of 9,000 square miles only to which, after the implementation of the Aden Protectorates Order, Britain annexed about 70,000 square miles of the Aden hinterland. Philby's objection was that it was illegal as well as immoral to snatch the areas of Arab independence under one or another pretext. (1)

1. See details in Ibid., pp. 231-235.
Britain's annexation was illegal not only in Philby's opinion but also in the eyes of the people of the annexed territories as is evident from the interviews that he had with them. When journeying in Hadramaut and Shabwa once he was told by a certain Salih that the British claim over his territory was ridiculous and without any substance.

By the by, I said to Salih, the British authorities in Aden informed me by telegram when I was at Mukallah that Shabwa and the Karab country lie within the jurisdiction of the Aulaqi Sultan. Tell me if that is correct.'Nonsense,' he replied, the pack of liars, this is our country and we own no ruler but ourselves'. The Sultan of Shibam had also scouted the idea, and considered Shabwa within his sphere of influence, though not under his rule.\(^1\)

Philby, then, rightly scoffs at the so-called British protection that had badly failed to establish peace in the Aden Protectorates. Wherever he went he saw but chaos and anarchy. The maladministration was especially evident in the areas under British protection. At the time of Philby's journey there was not a single wireless station in the area, nor was there any telegraph office, nor any postal organisation. Moreover the British made no special effort to bring

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1. Ibid. p. 236.
prosperity to the Aden Protectorates. Of course a few landing grounds were constructed but they were not meant for public transport but were used by the Royal Air Force in order to bomb and terrify the so called 'unruly' tribes so that they will not create law and order problems. (1) Philby rightly questioned that how far legitimate it was to employ such barbarous methods to secure the allegiance of the tribes who detested British occupation and wanted to regain their independent status. He was right to remark:

British protection is surely a misnomer. So far as the Aden Protectorate is concerned, it is ineffectual even to protect its own nominees from insult or injury if they stray from the beaten paths.... The simple fact is that these Arabs, independent since the days of the old Hymyarite empire, have no desire to be lorded over by foreigners—aliens by race and aliens by religion. To them foreign penetration is synonymous with exploitation. To them their wretched soil is riches, the antiques buried in their earth are a source of fabulous wealth. The foreigner comes to spy out their land and to annex it if it is worth his while. (2)


Another instance of Philby's anti-imperialism was his outright condemnation of the British, French and Israeli invasion of Egypt on the occasion of Suez Canal Crisis. Nasser and his associates brought about their revolution in 1952. But to bring about a revolution is one thing and to make it a success and harbinger of a new era of peace, stability and prosperity is another. The leadership of the revolution soon realized that the challenges facing their country were not easy to handle. Nasser's major problem was to raise the living standard of the common Egyptians by improving and stabilizing the economy of the country. His mind was teeming with ideas but he could not put them into action because of financial duress. Hard pressed for funds he decided to resort to generous foreign assistance that he hoped to come only from the Western block. His first major programme for improving the country's economy was to enlarge the Aswan High Dam in Upper Egypt in order to increase its irrigating capacity so that additional lands will be brought under cultivation. To accomplish this work he needed over a million dollars. The United States and Great Britain, in collaboration with the World Bank, made arrangements to lend the required funds to Egypt. But Nasser, instead of accepting the offer, decided to use the rivalry between Russia and the West in order to get a better deal for Egypt. As a result he issued a statement saying that the
Russians had offered him a better deal. In reality the Russians had made no such offer to Egypt. In fact, the purpose of Nasser's statement was to get more concessions from America and Britain. Besides this, he took several steps such as arrangements for training special commandos to attack Israel, flirtation with Russia and China and cultural and commercial pacts with the communist block which irritated the Western block. Moreover, he indulged in anti-Americanism which seemingly prompted the United States to cancel the deal. However, the main intention behind the cancellation of the deal was to humble and force Nasser to accept political, economic and military hegemony of the West.

But Nasser refused to budge. His reaction was swift and bold. He nationalized the Suez Canal and thus gave a direct blow to the economic interests of the West, especially Britain and France. Their reaction was expectedly hostile which also smacked of their imperialistic mentality. It was intolerable for them to allow a third-world country like Egypt to put its thumb on 'Europe's wind pipe'. They complained that Egypt had not enough competent personnel to run the Canal and that it lacked decorum and wisdom to behave responsibly in the comity of nations. Since the nationalization had hit hard the economic interests of Britain and
France they put a heavy pressure on Egypt to toe the line by freezing Egyptian assets in Western banks and ordering their ships to refuse to pay the regular dues to the Egyptian Government. Moreover they began to build up their forces near Egypt in order to invade it. Viewing the tense situation the Security Council of the United Nations was prompted to intervene in the matter. On October 5, 1956 a resolution was passed to run the Canal properly which all the concerned parties immediately accepted. But inspite of this Britain, France and Israel attacked Egypt to topple the Nasser regime. Both America and Russia promptly condemned the invasion which forced the aggressors to cease hostilities against and withdraw their forces from Egyptian territories. Within a month after the withdrawal the Egyptian engineers cleared the Canal of the ships sunk in it during the invasion. Thus they showed the world and proved their ability to run the Canal properly and competently.

Philby's stand, as expected, was to condemn the Anglo-French and Israeli invasion on the one hand and to justify Nasser's bold stance on the other. He wrote letters he and articles in Arab and Western press in which he supported Nasser's right to nationalize the canal in the name of Egyptian pride and dignity, and denounced the three cornered
invasion as a sinister imperial design to embarrass an independent Arab state. Moreover he greatly praised the Egyptian engineers for their ability to run the Canal without any foreign help, technical or financial. Extremely happy and sanguine he took it as a further vindication of his long cherished stand that the Arabs were competent enough to run their independent states.

The Palestine Problem. Philby's stand on British imperialism and Arab independence was no doubt worthy of praise and appreciation. However, sometimes his views in and approach to some of Arab problems such as the question of Palestine became highly embarrassing not only to himself but to his Arab friends as well.

The Palestine problem, as well known, originates from the Balfour Declaration of 1917 in which it was announced that the British Government will view "with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people". The Declaration further said that Britain will use its endeavours "to facilitate the achievement of this object". In the same Declaration it was also made clear that "nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of the existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine." (1) But the subsequent events proved the

That while nothing was done to prevent the Jews from implementing their unjust plan for establishing a Zionist state in Palestine, every effort was made to harm the interest and suppress the just aspirations of the Arab population living in the land for centuries. In fact the Balfour Declaration manifests the worst kind of colonization. Arthur Koestler had rightly remarked that 'one nation solemnly promised to a second nation the country of a third nation.'

Philby’s stand on the problem seems to have been inconsistent. On the one hand he condemned the Balfour Declaration as an act of betrayal and on the other tried to justify the Jewish immigration into Palestine. Addressing an English audience once he said:

I hope I may be permitted in all seriousness to dispel the notion that I am in any sense hostile to the ideals of Zionism.

In the same address he further said that the right of immigration into Palestine was open to all persons and that for the Jews that right was particularly guaranteed by international engagements, but surprisingly in a book

published in 1952 he declined to have ever justified the Jewish immigration into Palestine:

I have always held, and still hold, that the Jews, in whose favour the Balfour Declaration and the mandate were drafted, have no shadow of legal or moral right to go to Palestine.\(^1\)

It is difficult to reconcile between the two statements for the contradiction is too obvious to be ignored or refuted.

Philby's support to the Jewish claims in Palestine stemmed directly from his failure to understand the racist nature of Zionism as well as the real intention of the Zionist movement. It was this failure that led him to proclaim 'that the advent of the Jews to the scenes of their father's exploits will be advantageous to themselves and to their Arab neighbours.'\(^2\) Infact he was thinking on the line that the Jews had both skill and financial resources to bring prosperity to Palestine. But what he failed to realize was that the Jewish expertise in modern technique and their financial prowess, instead of being a means for peace and prosperity, may also become a tool for economic and political exploitation of the technologically and

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politically backward Arabs.

But the Arab leaders, unlike Philby did not fail to comprehend the real intentions and aims of the Zionist movement. They understood from the very beginning that the Zionist wanted to establish a Jewish state and not merely a national home as mentioned in the Balfour Declaration. It was because of this that the then Arab leader, King Husain denounced the Declaration as a breach of promise. Viewing his strong denunciation the British were quick to assure him that the Zionist state will be created only if it were 'compatible with the freedom of the existing population, both economic and political'.(1) But the leaders who came after Husain were consistent in their opposition to the Balfour Declaration and refused to accept empty British promises and assurances. Philby's own friend, Ibn Saud with whom he had many conversations on the subject was a great critic of the idea of a Jewish state for, in his opinion, it threatened to eliminate the Palestinian Arabs from their homeland.

But in Philby's opinion the basis of Arab opposition to Jewish settlement in Palestine was their xenophobia or their dislike of the people of non-Semitic origin. He rightly pointed out that the European Jews were not Semites but

1. Armajani, Yahya, Middle East past and present, New Jersey, p. 232.
probably those who had embraced Judaism at one or another
time. Philby's claim has been supported by other writers
as well. For instance Maxime Rodinson is of the opinion
that the Arabs of Palestine 'have much more of the ancient
Hebrews' 'blood' than most of the Jews of Diaspora'. \(^1\)
Another writer, Thomas Kiernan has also subscribed to the
same view:

Anthropologists concluded...that the
eastern European Jewish inventors of
Zionism had little or no biological
connexion to Palestine. \(^2\)

However, Philby's charge that it was Arab xenophobia
that led them to oppose Jewish immigration into Palestine
was thoroughly wrong. Infact it was their fear of being
or rendered a minority of being rooted out from their homelnd
that formed the basis of their opposition to the British
and Zionist plan to create an exclusively Jewish state in
Palestine.

But inspite of Arab opposition the Jews, with full
support of Britain, continued to come to and settle in
Palestine. Expectedly, with the passage of time, the Arabs
and the Jews began to clash with each other. Within two
decades the problem became so complex and serious that the
British Government was prompted to set up a commission in

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   New York, 1973, PP. 75-8C.
2. Quoted in Caurudy, Roger *The Case of Israel*, London, 19-5
   P. 46.
1936 under the chairmanship of Lord Peel with a view to finding out a just and enduring solution after a comprehensive study of the problem. The Commission submitted its report in 1937 in which it had recommended to terminate the mandate in favour of some other arrangement. This 'other arrangement' in view of the Commission was to create two sovereign independent states, one for the Arabs and the other for the Jews, and to institute a new Mandate 'to execute the trust of maintaining the sanctity of Jerusalem and Bethlehem and ensuring free and safe access to them for all the world'.

The Commission's recommendations were rejected both by the Arabs and the Jews. Philby, however, accepted them for the Commission's report, in his opinion, was highly favourable to the Arabs. According to him the Arabs, instead of rejecting the Commission's recommendations, should accept them with slight modifications. He presented his arguments with boldness and clarity:

The Arabs are bad bargainers. In this case nine-tenths of their full demands have been conceded. They reject the concession in the hope of getting ten-tenths. It is inconceivable that they should get that. It is conceivable that they may lose what is now offered. Yet

they persist in their obstinate refusal. By accepting the scheme in principle they could secure substantial modifications in their favour. By opposing it tooth and nail they may find themselves confronted with the choice between the scheme, as it stands and noting at all.  

Philby's suggestion, as he himself put it, 'was based on expediency rather than on the legal or moral merits of the Arab case against the admission of Jews into Palestine' (2) In his opinion the Western countries, especially Britain and the United States, either did not understand the Arab case or had no sympathy with their cause. And the Arabs were hardly in a position to change the minds of the Western countries. Hence in Philby's opinion it was better for them to accept the compromise that the Peel Commission had offered to them.

But the Arabs were greatly angered by Philby's stand and accused him of being pro-Zionist and insensitive to their emotional attachment to their mother land, the whole of Palestine. Even Ibn Saud felt embarrassed by his activities in this context. He made it clear through a press statement that Philby was not authorized by him to speak or write on his behalf. 'Some may think', he said, 'that Philby's

opinions reflect our own.... As far his personal opinions, they are his own and do not reflect our thoughts at all.\(^{(1)}\)

Philby, too, hastened to issue a statement in which he clarified that he was not a spokesman of Ibn Saud or the Saudi Government.

Philby, however, continued to take interest in the Palestine problem. In early 1939 he attended the Palestine Round Table Conference as interpreter of the Saudi delegation. During the Conference he conceived a so-called 'Philby plan' which, he hoped, would solve the problem for ever. He discussed his scheme with Weizmann and Fuad Hamza, a Saudi delegate, in a meeting. The main points of his scheme were as follows:

I had a secret lunch party at Acal Road - Dr. Weizmann and Bengurian to meet Fuad Hamza. We are to have another meeting at Acol Road to continue the talk, the idea being roughly to get Faisal in as King of Palestine with some quid pro quo in the way of Jewish immigration Say 50,000 in the next five years.\(^{(2)}\)

Weizmann supported Philby's scheme as it was obviously in favour of the Jews. Understandly Fuad Hamza was not enthu-

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1. Qouted in Monroe, E. Philby of Arabia, op. cit. p.214.
2. Ibid. p. 219.
siastic probably because the scheme did not take into consideration the main Arab demand, the prevention of Jewish immigration into Palestine. Due to his lukewarmth no second meeting, unlike Philby's expectation, was held.

Philby's opinion of the Arab leaders seems to have been very poor. He believed that they were easily purchasable. With this view in mind he prepared a new 'Philby plan' to solve the Palestine problem. The plan, as he explained in his Arabian Jubilee was that:

The whole of Palestine should be left to the Jews. All Arabs displaced therefrom should be resettled elsewhere at the expense of the Jews who would place a sum of £20 millions at the disposal of king Ibn Saud for this purpose. All other Asiatic Arab countries, with the sole exception of Aden should be formally recognized as completely independent in the proper sense of the term, these arrangements were to be proposed to king Ibn Saud, as the principal Arab ruler, by Britain and America, and guaranteed jointly by them in the event of their acceptance by him on behalf of the Arabs. (1)

1. Philby, Arabian Jubilee, op cit. pp. 212-213. Dr. Weizmann has also recorded the minutes of his meeting with Philby in his autobiography, Trial and Error. In Arabian Jubilee Philby contradicted some of Weizmann's accounts. But these are minor differences which figure only in the details and do not affect the main content of their discussions.
Philby discussed his scheme with some important Jewish leaders such as Weizmann, Moshe Shertok and Professor Lewis Namier who readily accepted it. They, then, decided between themselves that while Philby will go to Saudi Arabia to get the approval of Ibn Saud Weizmann would visit the United States to win the support of President Roosevelt.

In January 1940 Philby broached his scheme to King Ibn Saud who did not answer in 'yes' or 'no'. He also asked Philby not to discuss it with any one else. It is not clear that what Ibn Saud had in his mind, whether he wanted to accept the scheme or did not like it at all. Philby, however, interpreted the King's silence as his consent. Meanwhile Dr. Weizmann discussed the so-called 'Philby plan' with President Roosevelt in the same year, 1940. But he received no encouraging response from the American President. In 1943 he, however, again raised the matter and suggested to convene a conference to discuss the scheme. The conference was to be attended by America, Britain, Saudi Arabia and the representatives of the Zionist movement. America agreed to dispatch an emissary, Colonel Hoskins, to Saudi Arabia to know their mind. He was, however, rebuked by Ibn Saud who flatly refused to meet Weizmann for he had tried to bribe him through Philby in 1940. It is now clear that Philby had misinterpreted Ibn Saud's the silence as/royal consent to his scheme.
Thus the so-called 'Philby plan' could not take off the ground. But both Philby and Weizmann continued to believe in the utility and practicability of the scheme. But in reality they both were wide off the mark. The basic flaw with their scheme was that it viewed the Palestine problem as a purely commercial matter while for the Arabs it was an emotional one. It is hard to find a people in the world that can give up their homeland and settle in some other country for the sake of money. In fact the so-called 'philby plan' was not only absurd but also humiliating and greatly unfavourable to the Arabs.

Philby and His Arab Guides Philby was a traveller of great stature. He explored Arabia both on the back of camels and by car. Understandably a travel by camel in the Arabian desert is a difficult enterprise to undertake. Most especially a journey across the waterless desert tract, known as Rubal Khali, the Empty Quarter, is the kind of adventure which can be accomplished only by men endowed with great courage, and with the help of the best of Arabian guides. Philby had both. His adventurous nature, spirit and courage were beyond question. Moreover, he had friends like king Ibn Saud who could provide him with guides, camels, and above all protection from the desert robbers and unruly tribes.
Journeying with Arab guides, as Philby's experiences reveal, is both pleasant and frightening. In all his travel books, especially in the Empty Quarter he has recorded events which bring forth the fact that what kind of relationship, cordial or unpleasant, he had with his guides. On the one hand it reveals Philby's image of the Arabs and on the other his own unique character and personality as viewed by the Arabs. It is natural that when two or more persons meet with a view to living together for a considerable period of time, first of all, they try to understand each other.

Philby's Arab guides always found him a difficult man to handle with. For he, unlike other travellers, had some habits rather obsessions which were peculiar only with him.

A guide is generally supposed (or was held so before the emergence of mechanized transport in Arabia) to help a traveller cross the desert from one particular point to another. But for Philby a guide should be more than this.\(^1\) He must know and tell the traveller the names of oases, hills and places etcetera they pass by. Moreover, particularly in Philby's case, he must have patience and ability to accommodate with his habit of mapping or collection and preservation of insects, snakes and birds etcetera found in various parts of Arabia. These were Philby's usual activities on every

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desert journey which were of course beyond the comprehension of his companions who regarded such indulgences as useless, something that caused delay and discomfort. But a journey, according to Philby, must serve human knowledge. Hence he never bothered about the resentment of his companions regarding his 'extraordinary obsessions'. However, once he explained to Ali, one of the guides who served him during his adventure across the Empty Quarter:

> It is knowledge I seek which is better than wealth. I will take them (shells) to my country, where they will put them in treasure houses for people to see and study. You see, I too am a tracker like you. When you ride you read the sands and know what men and women have passed upon them a month ago or more or less. But when I see shells like these I understand what was happening a thousand years ago or more. (1)

Philby was the sort of man who could pay a glowing tribute to anybody who pleased him or acted as he liked. But when angry, irritated and provoked, he would curse even those people such as the guides whose services were hard to be denied. But Philby, 'hectoring, intemperate' and

determined to dominate and dictate his will angered his men on numerous occasions during his various explorations in Arabia. As a result there occurred serious rows between him and his companions or guides, especially during his journey across the Empty Quarter.

At a certain place called Shanna occurred the most serious of all squabbles. Philby wanted to go up to Sulaiyil, a far away place on the other side of the desert, about 360 miles from Shanna according to Philby. In between the two places lies the famous but frightful and waterless part of the Empty Quarter. By the time Philby's party was at Shanna, they were completely exhausted and began to show faint heartedness and refused to go ahead with Philby's plan. But Philby enlivened their spirit by distributing the money that he intended to give them at the end of the journey and thus succeeded to make up their mind to try his plan. On 22 February 1932 they began their march toward Sulaiyil. But within five days they were again exhausted and began to complain of Philby's inconsideration. Furthermore they wanted to travel in the nights in order to be safe from the scorching sun. But Philby insisted on journeying in the day light so that he could easily dispense with his usual works such as mapping or collecting insects etcetera. Besides these, there was acute shortage of water, rice and
other eatables. In such an unfavourable circumstance they suggested to get back to Shanna. But Philby would not accept their demand. He cursed Zayid, the leader of the party, or 'the evil genius...the Devil incarnate'\(^1\). Philby got so much out of temper that he criticised not only Zayid but the entire Arab race:

In such circumstances the Arab does not show up to advantage. He clings frantically, desperately, to life, however miserable, and, when that is at risk, loses heart and head....It was the waterless desert, the fear of thirst and death that made women of those men. I could not, would not yield. We had come 140 miles (since Shanna). A third of the journey was behind us and a steady effort would carry us through if only they would play the man. They were, of course, weak and disheartened with hunger for we had had nothing but dates since Shanna. I felt like Moses in the wilderness when the multitude clamoured against him.\(^2\)

But Philby had only the above-quoted outburst to offer.

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1. Ibid, P. 271
   It can be noted that at the end all was right. As true Muslims they forgave each other at Naifa when some of Philby's companions, in accordance with his own plan, left for their homes. In his The Empty Quarter Philby records the event as follows: "As they rose to follow in the tracks of the baggage train each of them saluted me with a Kiss on the forehead. Forgiveness for our failings! Said Ali. There is nothing to forgive, I replied, but I thank you for your services. In the keeping of God! And so I parted from eight of the companions of two months of wandering in the wilderness. The farewell of the Arab is manly indeed. With fair words on his lips he strides off into the desert and is gone. He never look back". (P. 299).

2. Ibid, P. 261.
Unlike Moses he could not strike on the rock to get water for his thirsty companions and as a result lost his case. They retreated to Naifa for recuperation. At this place Philby decided to send back the baggage train to Hufuf where from they had originally started their journey, and then to cross the desert with a selected band of people. They tried this plan successfully and reached Sulaiyil on 14 March 1932. Just in 9 days they had covered 375 miles, from Naifa to Sulaiyil, a great achievement indeed.

Whatever weaknesses with Philby's character and personality, he was after all fair and just for he has recorded faithfully what his companions thought of himself. This gives the reader an opportunity to know that how a foreign traveller was viewed by his Arab hosts:

We notice (remarked a certain Farraj) two things in you. Firstly you are hot-tempered and easily get angry if we do not as you please. And secondly you are ever ready to disbelieve what the guides say.... Surely you know that the guides do not lie deliberately, and this is their own country where they know every bush and every hummock, why then should you suspect them of lying. (1)

However, when the journey ended Philby, and his

1. Ibid. P. 221.
companions, were too happy to 'forget the evils of our strange association in an enterprise.' Philby thanked every member of his party, men and animal alike, and gave them all the credit for accomplishing the great feat:

To them and the great beasts that bore us—hungering and thirsting but uncomplaining—the credit of a great adventure. *(1)*

As it appears Philby had, as a whole, a favourable image of the Arabs. He was especially fascinated by the desert and liked its free and careless inhabitants. Furthermore, unlike many English travellers he avoided, barring a few occasions, to pass a sweeping remark on the Arab race, its religion and culture. In fact, owing to many reasons such as his long association with Ibn Saud, his early liberalism and later on his conversion to Islam which enabled him to see the Arab society as an insider, he was better placed than many other Englishmen to depict a real and true image of the Arabs. As a matter of fact he stands very prominent among his contemporary English travellers, mainly because he sincerely championed the cause of Arab independence against British imperialism and tried his best through his realistic free writings (which are although not completely free from errors and inconsistencies) to improve the badly tarnished image of the Arabs among his countrymen. It was really a great contribution, especially when viewed in the perspective of the common trend prevalent in England in the first half of the running century.

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1. Ibid. p. 211.