

Fakhri (Fahrettin) Paşa and the end of Ottoman rule in Medina (1916-1919)

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Abstract

The siege of Medina (1916-1919) is one of the more significant events in the Near Eastern theatre in World War I. Fakhri Paşa (Fahrettin Türkkan, 1868-1948), the legendary figure of the siege, resisted several demands of the Sharif of Mecca, Husayn ibn 'Ali, and the British to surrender and even ignored orders from Istanbul to hand over the city but was eventually forced to surrender. The events in Medina have not gone unnoticed by historiography, although a full appreciation has still to be given. Eye witness reports by officers of the Ottoman garrison in Medina have constituted the basis for the narrative of the siege of Medina. British documents have added to our knowledge. Other sources used are the partially unpublished papers of Fakhri Paşa and German material.

Keywords

Arabia; Arab Revolt; Hijaz; World War I; Fahrettin Türkkan; Fakhri Paşa; Medina

Of all the Arab provinces of the empire, it was the independent *sancak* of Medina, or, to be more precise, the city of Medina proper, where Ottoman rule was to last longest, namely until January 10, 1919. The Ottoman retreat from the other Arab lands was completed in October 1918. Thus ended roughly four centuries of Ottoman rule over regions with a predominantly Arabic-speaking population: Syria, Iraq, Palestine, Egypt and parts of the Arabian Peninsula, most importantly the Hijaz. Sultan Selim, the conqueror of

Author's note: This article is part of a larger study dealing with the history of the Hijaz in World War I. The main sources are the papers of General Fahrettin Türkkan (1868-1948), aka Fakhri Paşa, which were written during the siege of Medina and passed into the possession of his sons Selim and Orhan Türkkan, both of whom were major-generals in the Turkish Army until their involuntary retirement in the purge of the Turkish Armed Forces in 1960. I have also used documents in the British National Archives at Kew and in the Politisches Archiv of the German Foreign Office, in particular the diary of Karl Neufeld, which he kept during his sojourn in Medina in July and August 1915.

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Mamluk Egypt (1517), took the honorary title of “Servant of the two Holy Places” (*khadim al-haramayn al-sharifayn*, i.e. of Mecca and Medina) from the Nile to the Bosphorus. The significance of Medina above all stems from the fact that the city was the last domicile of the prophet. Here the burial mosque of Muhammad was decorated magnificently during the late Ottoman period.¹

The Hijaz occupied a special place in the territories of the empire. This had to do with the fact that the spiritual authority of the caliph depended on his rule over the Holy Places. The supremacy over the Hijaz carried with it not only prestige, but also responsibilities such as administering Mecca and Medina and securing pilgrim routes and caravans. The Ottomans honoured these obligations until the very end of World War I, when purely military reasons would have justified a withdrawal from the Hijaz.

However, the sultan’s control over the Arabian Peninsula from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century was largely nominal. This was especially true for the Hijaz where the *ashraf* (Sharifians), i.e. the descendants of the prophet from the clan Hashim (Hashemites) and the tribe Quraysh and emirs of Mecca, were the bosses. The Sublime Porte was forced to be content with having their claim to the supremacy over the Holy Places recognized by the Hashemites.²

The composition of the Arab provinces changed during the last decades of the empire. The former *Eyalet Haram-i Nabawi* was replaced by the *vilayet* of Jidda (Ottoman: Cidde) in 1870 and renamed in *vilayet-i Hicaz* in 1872 with the *sancaks* of Jidda, Medina and Mecca.³ The province of Hijaz,

¹ After his conquest of Egypt in 1517 Sultan Selim brought with him to Istanbul the *emanat-i mukaddese*, the relics from the Hijaz. They include the mantle of the prophet (*hirka-i saadet*), his banner (*sancak-i şerif*), facial hair and suchlike and are displayed in the Enderun Hazinesi of Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi, see Aydın, Hilmi, *Hirka-i Saadet ve Mukaddese Emanetler* (Istanbul: Kayak Yayıncılık, 2004), p. 9. There are other valuables which were housed at the *haram al-sharif* in Medina until 1917 when Fakhri Paşa transported them under military guard on the Hijaz Railway to Istanbul so that they would not fall into the hands of the foe, Kıcıman, Naci Kaşif, *Medine Müdâfaası. Hicaz Bizden Nasıl Ayrıldı?* (Istanbul: Sebil Yayınları, 1971, 2. ed. 1976), pp. 32-3.

² One of the most interesting travelogues about the Hijaz is the book by the convert Arthur Wavell, *A Modern Pilgrim in Mecca* (London: Constable, 1918). Wavell (1883-1950), visiting the Holy Places in 1908, has the following to say about the challenges to Ottoman administration in Arabia: “To occupy and police Arabia in such a manner as would make it a safe country for travellers, would be at present about as practicable an undertaking as an invasion of the moon. Neither the Turks nor any one else can hope to accomplish it” (p. 74).

³ Birken, Andreas, *Die Provinzen des Osmanischen Reiches* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1976), pp. 252-3 (Beihefte zum Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients, Reihe B, Geisteswissenschaften 13).

encompassing the towns of Tabuk, Taif, al-Ula, Medina, Jidda and Mecca, included all the areas from the border of the *vilayet* of Syria, south of Ma'an, down to the northern border of the *vilayet* of Yemen.⁴ In 1908 Medina was detached from the province of Hijaz and put under the direct control of the central government as an independent *sancak*.⁵

Arabia started to play a more important role in the imperial structure through Abdülhamid's Pan-Islamic policy in the second half of the nineteenth century.⁶ The symbol of this policy was the Hijaz railroad which was designed to buttress the Ottoman claim to the Holy Places. The railroad was to facilitate the pilgrimage, to accelerate the development of remote provinces and to help in fighting rebellious Bedouin tribes by moving troops more swiftly. The construction of the railroad (started in 1900 and finished in 1908) had thus religious, political, economic and military reasons. The increased significance of the Arab lands in the context of Abdülhamid's Pan-Islamic policy is reflected also in the Imperial Almanacs (*devlet salnameleri*). Since the year 1306/1888 the list of provinces no longer began with the European possessions or followed the Arabic alphabet (in both cases the *vilayet* of Edirne would have been first), but with the *vilayet* of Hijaz and the Holy Places. Then came the other Arab provinces and Anatolia, with the European provinces being mentioned at the end.⁷

The majority of the population in the Hijaz consisted of bedouins – settled, nomad and semi-nomad. Their number was estimated at around 400,000 during the first decade of the twentieth century. City dwellers were in the minority with about 150,000 people living in the cities of Jidda, Mecca, Medina, and Taif. Financially, the urban and tribal population relied on Ottoman largesse. The economy in the Hijaz was almost exclusively based on the pilgrimage. Bedouins provided camels; the most important occupations in Mecca and Medina had to do with services offered to pilgrims, i.e. accommodation, food, and guiding (especially the *mutawwifs* of Mecca and the *muzawwirs* of Medina).⁸ Any conflict in and about the Holy

⁴ Hogarth, David, *Hejaz before World War I: A Handbook* (Cambridge: Oleander Press, 1978), pp. 51-2.

⁵ Kornrumpf, Hans-Jürgen, "Die osmanische Herrschaft auf der Arabischen Halbinsel im 19. Jahrhundert", *Saeculum* 31 (1980), 399-408, here: pp. 402-3.

⁶ Ochsenwald, William, *Religion, Society, and the State in Arabia: The Hijaz under Ottoman Control, 1840-1908* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1984).

⁷ Kornrumpf, "Die osmanische Herrschaft", p. 403.

⁸ Teitelbaum, Joshua, *The Rise and Fall of the Hashimite Kingdom of Arabia* (London: Hurst and Company, 2001), pp. 20-30.

Cities would therefore not only damage the prestige of their rulers, the Sharifians, and their nominal Ottoman overlords, but also endanger the livelihood of the population in the Hijaz.

Countdown to revolt: deterioration in relations between the Ottoman government and the Sharif of Mecca (1913-1916)

It is true that the leading political role in the Hijaz was played by the *sharifs* of Mecca.⁹ But their control of Medina was far from absolute as for long periods Medina was ruled by the Shiite Husaynid branch of the *ashraf*, called *sadat*. Then there was yet another office holder, the *muhafiz*, theoretically under the authority of the *vali*, but in practice sometimes acting independently from both the *vali* and the *sharif*.¹⁰ The arrival of the railway in Medina (1908) and the upgrade of the city from a *sancak* to an independent *sancak* (1910) whose administration was directly linked to the Interior Ministry, reminded the sharif Husayn ibn 'Ali¹¹ that his responsibility mainly concerned bedouin and pilgrimage matters; he had to depend on his relative, the Shiite Sharif Shahhat ibn 'Ali, as his representative in the city. Therefore, on the eve of World War I, Husayn's power in Medina was quite limited. Furthermore, the Committee of Union and Progress, the Young Turks, had an active branch in the city thereby exerting a modicum of influence. This volatile constellation provided for strife and conflict between the two sides.¹²

⁹ Abu-Manneh, Butrus, "Sultan Abdülhamid II and the Sharifs of Mecca (1880-1900)", *Asian and African Studies* 9 (Jerusalem 1973), 1-21.

¹⁰ Kayalı, Hasan, *Arabs and Young Turks. Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1918* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997), pp. 159-60.

¹¹ According to Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks*, pp. 148-9, his appointment by the sultan in 1908 was not controversial. Philby, however, states, without giving sources: "The second nail [in the coffin of the Hijaz, the first being the construction of the Hijaz Railway, MS] was driven into the coffin of the Hijaz in 1908, when the Young Turk Government selected Husain ibn Ali for the important post of Grand Sharif of Mecca. Sultan Abdul Hamid had already on a previous occasion flatly refused to appoint Husain to that post, and when he heard that he had been appointed by the Turkish Government he made a remark which was justified by the event within seven or eight years. 'The Hijaz', he exclaimed, 'is as good as lost to Turkey'", H. St. Philby, "The recent history of the Hejaz", *Journal of the Central Asian Society* 12 (1925), 332-48, here: p. 336.

¹² Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks*, pp. 159-60, pp. 167-168; Kayalı, Hasan, "A glimpse from the periphery: Medina in the Young Turk era", in Elisabeth Özdalga et al. (eds.), *Istanbul as Seen from a Distance. Centre and Provinces in the Ottoman Empire* (Istanbul: Svenska

The various initiatives of the government in the Hijaz – the building of the railroad, changes in administration and in particular the establishment of a university in Medina – incited the opposition of the Sharifians. In a meeting with ‘Abdallah ibn Husayn, the founding rector of the university, the well-known Egyptian Panislamist ‘Abd al-‘Aziz Shawish (1872 or 1876-1929)¹³ censured ‘Abdallah for the continuous obstruction against government projects.¹⁴

Tensions ran high when Vehib Paşa was appointed as governor and military commander in 1914. Known as being opposed to the Arab movement, he was tasked with restricting Husayn’s power through the application of the new Law for the Provinces and the extension of the railroad from Medina to Mecca.¹⁵ Vehib was, however, brought back into line by the government and recalled since the government still shied away from a full-blown conflict. These factors contributed to the Sharif’s increasing insecurity, leading him to make contacts with the British as well as Arab nationalists in Syria and Lebanon.

From the outbreak of the war the government urged Husayn to supply troops and participate in the *jihad*, wanting to test his loyalty while at the same time depriving him of Bedouin fighters he could have used whenever necessary against the Ottomans. Husayn’s hesitation or unwillingness to comply with the request is understandable as he might have feared that this was a first Ottoman step towards applying conscription, from which the Hijaz had heretofore been exempted. The government’s plea became a contentious issue for many months (summer 1914-February 1916), until finally, after the first unsuccessful attack on the Suez Canal, Husayn promised to contribute soldiers from the Hijaz for a second expedition. Shortly before, he had entered into negotiations with Britain (Husayn-Mc Mahon correspondence) which were concluded at the beginning of 1916 with the British government promising recognition of an independent

Forskningsinstitutet, 2011), pp. 139-54 (Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul, Transactions vol. 20); Teitelbaum, *The Rise and Fall*, pp. 33-5.

¹³ ‘Abd al-Nabi Qunaybar, Salim, *al-ittijahat al-siyasiyya wa l-fikriyya wa l-ijtima’iyya fi l-adab al-‘arabi al-mu‘asir: ‘Abd al-‘Aziz al-Shawish 1872-1929* (Beirut, 1968).

¹⁴ Anon. [probably Shawish]: “Der Aufstand im Hedschas”, *Die Islamische Welt* 1 (1916/17), pp. 49-51; *Mudhakkirat li l-Malik ‘Abdallah b. al-Husayn*, no place, no date (approx. 1965), p. 87; *Al-athar al-kamila li l-Malik ‘Abdallah b. al-Husayn* (3rd ed. Beirut, 1985), pp. 100-1. Incomplete translation: Graves, Philip P. (ed.): *Memoirs of King Abdullah of Transjordan* (London: J. Cape, 1950, 2nd ed.), pp. 117-18.

¹⁵ Dawn, C. Ernest, *From Ottomanism to Arabism. Essays on the Origins of Arab Nationalism* (Urbana-Chicago-London: University of Illinois Press, 1973), pp. 16-17; Teitelbaum, *The Rise and Fall*, p. 69; Kayali, *Arabs and Young Turks*, pp. 182-4.

Arab state if Husayn supported the entente in the war. It was in this context that the historic visit of Enver and Cemal to Medina took place.

Enver and Cemal's visit to Medina (February 19-20, 1916): a propaganda trip on the brink of disaster?

Enver and Cemal's trip to Medina had several objectives. Concretely, the trip should crown the long-standing attempt of the government to obtain troops from Husayn. These were to be trained and armed by Ottoman officers in Medina before they were moved to the Sinai. In exchange for this support the government would recall the governor of the Hijaz province from Mecca and transfer his powers to the Sharif.¹⁶ In a more general way, the visit was intended to counteract the above-mentioned escalation of conflicts between the Ottoman government and the Emir of Mecca. Moreover, religion was to be emphasized as a unifying bond between Arabs and Turks. Finally, an effort was to be made to win the Arabs over to the Young Turk policies of Panislamism and Ottomanism.¹⁷ Enver and

¹⁶ Musil, Alois, *Zur Zeitgeschichte von Arabien* (Leipzig-Wien: Hirzel, 1918), pp. 28-9. Although Musil had first-hand knowledge of the region and toured the interior and the east of Arabia in 1914 and 1915, he never visited Medina and Mecca; still, his depiction is full of details which he must have gotten from eye-witnesses. Musil puts the date of the visit as March 8 and 9. However, a report in *Die Welt des Islam* 4/1-2, 1916, pp. 73-4, and a dispatch from Cemal to Husayn ibn 'Ali, sent from Medina on February 20 (Erden, Ali Fuad, *Birinci Dünya Harbinde Suriye Hâtraları*, vol. I (Istanbul 1954), pp. 180-3), confirm the earlier date. Perhaps the later date (March) is due to problems in converting the financial year (*mali*) to the Christian date.

¹⁷ Later other delegations were sent to Medina with the aim of the government to nail its colours to the mast as well as repairing relations with the Sharifians. In the first category falls the visit of leading functionaries of the Young Turks in October and November 1916. A summary of the activities of this delegation, based on the account of its members, can be found in Feldmann, Wilhelm, *Reise zur Suesfront* (Weimar: Kiepenheuer, 1917) (Deutsche Orient-Bücherei, 25), pp. 69-78. Feldmann was the correspondent of the *Berliner Tageblatt* in Istanbul and accompanied the delegation to Syria and the Suez front, but, for obvious reasons, not to the Hijaz. In the second category falls the mission of İbrahim Hayrullah Bey [Pirizade, Minister of Justice 1913- February 1917; President of the Council of State (*Şura-yı Devlet Reisi*) 1914-1918, see Küneralp, Sinan, *Son Dönem Osmanlı Erkân ve Ricali, 1839-1922* (Istanbul: İsis Press, 1999), p. 83]. İbrahim was a close friend of Husayn, their relations dating from the period when Husayn lived in Istanbul. He was to offer him the emirate of Hijaz with extended powers and a line of succession from father to son as well as payments. İbrahim succeeded in establishing contact with Husayn through Bedouin tribal leaders. Allegedly he received assurances from Husayn, that he considered himself as "custodian until another Sultan came to power who was capable of representing the interests of Islam

Cemal were the highest-ranking Ottoman leaders who had ever visited the birthplace of Islam. For, no Ottoman sultan and caliph had ever taken it upon himself to travel to the Holy Places. It was ironically left to the “worldly” Young Turk leaders to represent the most powerful Islamic state at the Holy Places. As it happened, the first visit ever of important Ottoman statesmen became the swan song for Ottoman rule in Arabia. The programme of the visit was organized with pomp and circumstance, and it bore a heavily religious accent. Enver and Cemal were accompanied by Faysal, Muslim dignitaries from Beirut, Damascus and Jerusalem as well as the propagandist of the trip, Muhammad Kurd ‘Ali. The delegation was welcomed at the railroad station by government officials, *‘ulama’*, and numerous functionaries of the city’s various sacred sites, such as the eunuchs (*aghawat*) of the prophet’s tomb, thousands of inhabitants and pilgrims. Naturally, Medina had been decked out magnificently with banners (such as: “With the mercy of God we will move against Egypt. May the Almighty award the victory to the Sultan”), flags and triumphal arches. Commemorative poems were declaimed and hymns sung. Camels and sheep were slaughtered in honour of the distinguished guests. Hospitals, schools and military barracks were inspected, but it is noteworthy that Kurd ‘Ali, charged with publicizing the trip, concentrates almost exclusively on the meetings with religious dignitaries and visits to religious institutions, i.e. the mission was to give a government which had introduced secular reforms a religious face.¹⁸ This aspect is born out by Musil as well. Enver, writes Musil, in order to “dispel the distrust of the pious”, was dressed in a liturgical white caftan, with a white tarbush on his head. He carried out the ritual of lighting the lanterns at the prophet’s tomb on Friday evening. Enver impressed people by performing all the prescribed prayers, visiting the graves of holy men and attending religious instruction. He insisted on sweeping the prophet’s tomb with a broom.¹⁹ Musil concludes that through Enver’s deeply felt fulfilment of religious duties, the standing of the Young Turk government was enhanced.

Enver was overwhelmed with emotion. In contrast, Cemal was “harsh and frigid”. Faysal was “cold as ice and without the slightest emotion”,

in an effective manner”. The German Foreign Office report commented that İbrahim’s mission was not given a chance (Politisches Archiv des AA, R 13880, Kühlmann, Kaiserlich Deutsche Botschaft an Bethmann Hollweg, 31. Januar 1917, K 197019).

¹⁸ Kurd ‘Ali, Muhammad, *al-Rihla al-Anwarîyya ila l-asqa’ al-hijazîyya wa-l-shamiyya* (Beirut, 1334/1916), pp. 257-70; *Die Welt des Islams* 4/1-2 (1916), pp. 73-4.

¹⁹ Cleaning the Prophet’s Tomb was historically both a duty and a privilege for Medina’s eunuchs.

causing Erden to comment: “Who knows what he thought at the bottom of his soul?”²⁰ Faysal must have been a very good actor to hide his feelings as he had reason to fear that the visit of the two leaders could end in a row, to say the least.

An absurd situation developed, at least if we can trust the narrative of Lawrence which verges on the surreal.²¹ The very Bedouins of Husayn who presented mock fights and intended to risk their lives for the Young Turk leaders at the Suez Canal were now, according to Lawrence, prepared to kill them at a field exercise reviewed by Enver and Cemal. Only on Faysal's recommendation that the Bedouins honour the laws of Arab hospitality, was the danger to the two triumvirs averted.²² Enver and Cemal left the Hijaz, “...being deeply suspicious of what they had seen...” and decided to send reinforcements to Medina.²³

²⁰ Erden, *Birinci Dünya Harbinde*, pp. 179-83. See also another chronicler of the trip, Falih Rifki Atay in his *Zeytinadağı* (Istanbul: Bateş, 1981), pp. 53-8. Whereas Enver shed tears, Cemal's face had frozen into a “mask”, and only after Enver had cried incessantly, did Cemal seem to shed tears as well.

²¹ Lawrence, T.E. (Lawrence of Arabia), *Seven Pillars of Wisdom. A Triumph* (London: Harmondsworth 1965) (Penguin Modern Classics, 1696), pp. 51-2. There is no question that Lawrence is a notoriously unreliable source, cf. Elie Kedourie's assessment of “...Lawrence's exalted and overheated productions...” (“The Surrender of Medina, January 1919”, *Middle Eastern Studies* 13 (1977), 124-43, here, p. 130), but it is interesting that Erden quoting Lawrence does not refute his narrative. Yusuf Hikmet Bayur writes that Lawrence arranged the episode like a novel: *Türk İnkılabı Tarihi*, cilt III, kısım 3 (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 1991), pp. 254-6 (Atatürk Kültür, Dil ve Tarih Yüksek Kurumu, VIII/14). According to Musil, *Zur Zeitgeschichte von Arabien*, p. 28, Faysal had proposed to the two leaders to perform a *hajj* to Mecca as well, but they sensed that this would be too risky as they were well-informed about Husayn's activities. Still, even if Cemal and Enver did not realize the danger they were in even in Medina, it is surprising that they risked confronting the lion in his den.

²² Watching this *fantasia*, Enver asked Faysal if these fighters were volunteers for the Holy War. “Yes”, said Feisal. Willing to fight to the death against the enemies of the faithful? “Yes”, said Feisal again; and then Arab chiefs came up to be presented, and Sherif Ali ibn el-Husseini, of Modigh, drew him aside whispering, ‘My Lord, shall we kill them now?’ and Feisal said, ‘No, they are our guests’. Because the sheykh's insisted, it took Faysal further efforts to save “...the lives of the Turkish dictators, who had murdered his best friends on the scaffold” (Lawrence, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, p. 52).

²³ Lawrence, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, p. 52. On the second day of his stay in Medina, Cemal sent a telegram to Husayn that the camel rider unit he had supplied was to be the guests of the Ottoman army in Medina as long as they had to wait for their transport by train to the Sinai; arming them was to take place in Jerusalem (and not in Medina as Musil reports). These cautionary measures show that Cemal did not trust Husayn. Therefore, his claim that he never expected that Husayn would risk a rupture with the government is hardly credible; rather, he seems deliberately to play down Husayn's ambitions in order to magnify Husayn's treason: Djemal Pasha [Cemal Paşa], *Memories of a Turkish Statesman*

On May 31, 1916 (that is hardly a week before the outbreak of the hostilities in Medina) Fakhri Paşa²⁴ with his Hijaz Expeditionary Force (*Hicaz Kurve-i Seferiyyesi*)²⁵ arrived in Medina.²⁶ Other troops that were part of Medina's military infrastructure included the Medina Fortress Command with several battalions under General Basri Paşa and the 58th Infantry Division under Lieutenant Colonel Ali Necib.²⁷ Altogether, these troops numbered around 14,000 men, a formidable force which required a strong Arab military presence in order to prevent the Ottoman troops from sorties.²⁸

(1913-1919) (London: Hutchinson, 1922), p. 212: "...it never struck me as possible that a man of Sherif Hussein's experience, a greybeard with one foot in the grave, could be so egoistical and ambitious...".

²⁴ His full name was Fahreddin, in Republican Turkey he took on the family name Türkkan. Born in Ruşçuk (present day Bulgaria) in 1868, he attended the *Mekteb-i Harbiye* (War Academy) and assumed several commands in the Balkan Wars. At the outbreak of World War I he became the deputy of the Commander-in-Chief of the Fourth Army, Ahmed Cemal Paşa who was simultaneously Minister of the Marine and member of the Young Turk triumvirate. In 1916 he advanced to Commander of the so-called Hijaz Expeditionary Corps. The nearly 50 year old Fakhri was considered to be a capable, if unscrupulous officer; Lawrence, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, p. 53, characterizes him as "...the courageous old butcher who had bloodily 'purified' Zeitun and Urfa of Armenians". However, Vahakn Dadrian remarks that he played only a minor role in the Armenian deportations as commander of Aleppo's 12th Army Corps: "The Armenian question and the wartime fate of the Armenians as documented by the officials of the Ottoman Empire's World War I allies: Germany and Austria-Hungary", *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 34 (2002), 59-85, here p. 75. He was one of the first avid photographers in the Ottoman empire and collaborated with the photo studio Phebus, see Çizgen, Engin, *Photography in the Ottoman Empire 1839-1919* (Istanbul: Haşet Kitabevi, 1987), pp. 133-5. His collection of photographs is housed at the Research Centre for Islamic History, Art and Culture (IRCICA) in Istanbul. On his biography see Kıcıman, *Medine Müdâfaası, passim*; Koçu, Reşad Ekrem, *Istanbul Ansiklopedisi*, Istanbul: Koçu Yayınları, 1971), pp. 5482-5486; Şerifoğlu, Ömer Faruk, "Türkkan, Fahrettin", in *Yaşamları ve Yapıtlarıyla Osmanlılar Ansiklopedisi*, vol. II (Istanbul: YKY, 1999), pp. 633-4. Several details of his life can be gleaned from his military career sheet ("safahat cedveli") which is among his papers.

²⁵ Encompassing a camel corps, several regiments, signals companies, support and medical units.

²⁶ 'Abd al-Basit Badr in his *al-Tarikh al-shamil li l-Madina al-Munawwara*, vol. 3, (Madina, 1414/1993), p. 46, mentions that Fakhri's car was the first ever in Medina.

²⁷ Murphy, David, *The Arab Revolt. Lawrence sets Arabia Ablaze* (Oxford-New York: Osprey, 2008), p. 27.

²⁸ Usually, the number of men attached to the various units deployed in and around Medina is given as 10,000 to 14,000. However, if we are to follow the numbers of Kıcıman, *Medine Müdâfaası*, pp. 19-20, who, as director of personnel affairs in Fakhri's headquarter was well-placed to judge, then only around 3,500 soldiers and officers were stationed in Medina proper, although he says nothing about the number of units deployed in outlying

Thus, the stage was set for the Hashemite Revolt; only its starting date was yet uncertain. The reinforcements of troops convinced Husayn that the Turks had got wind of his negotiations with Britain. The repression in Syria had intensified; only a few weeks earlier the executions of Arab nationalists had taken place in Beirut (May 6, 1916).²⁹ Moreover, rumours that a German expedition under Major von Stotzingen was on its way to the Hijaz, increased Husayn's fears and eventually led him to proclaim the revolt prematurely.³⁰ The expedition never made it to Medina, but it had a precursor a year earlier which we will examine in the following.

A German fact-finding and propaganda mission to Medina in 1915

Major Stotzingen's expedition was but one of several German missions to the Hijaz in World War I.³¹ They took place in the context of the

positions. British reports, which mention the evacuation of as many as 8,000 men in the context of the Ottoman surrender, are much more convincing, see below.

²⁹ For Erden, the chief of staff of Cemal, "the executions were not the reason, but at best the pretext for the revolt", *Birinci Dünya Harbinde* p. 267.

³⁰ The immediate task of the Stotzingen mission was "the establishment of a German propaganda centre in South Arabia from where agitation over the Red Sea to Sudan, in Abyssinia and in Somaliland was to be carried out". The mission travelled up to al-Ula with an Ottoman detachment under Hayri Bey sent as reinforcement for the troops in Yemen. The group, consisting of Stotzingen, Neufeld and several other members arrived in Yanbu' al-Bahr on May 21 where they stayed until June 9 because of the worsening situation in the Hijaz, cf. Morsey, Konrad, *T.E.Lawrence und der arabische Aufstand 1916-18* (Osnabrück: Biblio-Verlag, 1976). The coincidence of this force on its way to Medina and the Stotzingen expedition alarmed the British authorities considering the consequences these operations could have had, namely extensive Ottoman control of the coasts of Arabia and Yemen, a threat to British Aden and a connection with German East Africa which could have aggravated the situation of British troops employed there: "The seriousness of their purpose is shown by the scale of the undertaking. There is no case on record hitherto of such a Turkish force marching the length of Arabia. They were going to re-establish Turkish domination in the Peninsula, and to be an object lesson to the Arabs of the undiminished might of Turkey", *The Arab Bulletin* 22, 19 September 1916, p. 272 (the *Arab Bulletin* reports are reprinted in Bidwell, Robin (ed.): *Arab Bulletin: Bulletin of the Arab Bureau in Cairo, 1916-1919* (London: Gerrards Cross: Archive Editions, 1986), vol. IV, 1919. Bulletins 108-114. The most contemporary account of the Stotzingen expedition is by Holzhausen, Rudolf, "Die Mission Stotzingen und der Beginn des Arabischen Aufstandes (1916). Eine Kriegserinnerung aus der alten Türkei", *Süddeutsche Monatshefte* 33 (1935-1936), 560-8.

³¹ Donald McKale sheds some light on these missions in his article "Germany and the Arab Question in the First World War", *Middle Eastern Studies* 29/2 (1993), 236-53, and in his book *War by Revolution. Germany and Great Britain in the Middle East in the Era of*

well-known German efforts to incite uprisings in the Muslim world against the Entente, especially Britain. Only one of these missions actually made it to Medina. It was carried out by the German merchant and adventurer Karl (Charles) Neufeld (1856-1918) who had become famous as “prisoner of the Khalifa” in Mahdist Sudan from 1887 to 1898; Neufeld also took part in the Stotzingen expedition.³² Neufeld’s task was to fight his way through to Sudan via Medina and the Yemen in order to spread propaganda in favour of the German-Turkish alliance. Together with four Yemeni Arabs he arrived by train in Medina on July 12, 1915. Neufeld, who had converted to Islam during his long stay in Omdurman, confided to his diary: “Today I will pray as the first German at the tomb of the Prophet”. For Neufeld, his stay in Medina combined both the personal experience of the *hajj* and his political mission.³³

World War I. (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1998). Another recent publication dealing with German war aims in the Middle East is by Sean McMeekin: *The Berlin-Baghdad Express. The Ottoman Empire and Germany's Bid for World Power* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 2010). The German scholar Bernhard Moritz, director of the Khedivial Library in Cairo, had been on a mission to Medina in December 1914 when he decided to travel to Sudan instead (McMeekin, *The Berlin-Baghdad Express*, pp. 146-7). Leo Frobenius, a famous German Africa specialist and anthropologist, set out for Medina half a year before Neufeld, but aborted his mission due to the danger of being attacked, see the excellent study of Rocio da Riva, “Lawrence of Arabia’s forerunner. The bizarre enterprise of Leo Frobenius, aka Abdul Kerim Pasha, in Arabia and Eritrea (1914-1915)”, *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 99 (2009), pp. 29-111. It is doubtful whether Max Roloff ever reached Mecca (December 1914) and reported what he had seen or if his report was a fabrication, see, Tilman, Lüdke, *Jihad made in Germany. Ottoman and German Propaganda and Intelligence Operations in the First World War* (Münster: Lit, 2005) (Studien zur Zeitgeschichte des Nahen Ostens und Nordafrikas, 12), pp. 149-52. Roloff (under the name Roloff-Breslau) is the author of *Arabien und seine Bedeutung für die Erstarkung des Osmanenreiches* (Leipzig: Velt, 1915) (Länder und Völker der Türkei, 5), in which he refers to his “own notes and observations made during travels in Arabia since 1886 and most recently from September to December 1914” (p. 3).

³² Neufeld was born in Western Prussia and died in July 1918 near Berlin. He left the University of Leipzig without a degree and established himself first in Cairo in 1880 as entrepreneur and interpreter for the British army and in the mid-eighties in Aswan. On a business trip to Kordofan he was taken prisoner by supporters of the Mahdiyya and carried off to Omdurman where he spent 12 years, mostly in chains. He was liberated during the reconquest of the Sudan under Kitchener in 1898. Subsequently he wrote his memoirs of his years in imprisonment in Cairo and settled again in Aswan with his Abyssinian wife with whom he had three children (he had been married to a British nurse in Cairo with whom he had one daughter). After the outbreak of World War I Neufeld was expelled from Egypt by the British as a national of an enemy country. He then became involved in the German missions described here. The present author is currently writing a biography of Neufeld.

³³ His “Tagebuch” (diary) about his trip and stay in Medina is included in file R 21141, L 368668-831, Politisches Archiv, Auswärtiges Amt.

He started right away with gathering information³⁴ about the atmosphere in the city and making propaganda for the German-Ottoman alliance. He was able to gain the confidence of the locals and to convince them that he had been a Muslim for 30 years, known by the name of Sheykh ‘Abdallah Naufal (the Arabized version of Neufeld) al-Almani. Several Sudanese inhabitants of Medina identified him as the famous “prisoner of the Khalifa”, although this did not damage his credibility. Neufeld easily made contacts with scholars and notables in Medina, among them the Egyptian Mahmud Schoel, the Moroccan Hamdan al-Wamui (?) and Muhammad Salah al-Tunisi³⁵ and several others with whom he discussed the war in Europe and the battles at the Dardanelles. Neufeld accused the British of attempting to establish rule over the Muslim world. According to him, the Germans pursued a more sincere policy vis-à-vis the Muslims and wished to cooperate, not to rule. Neufeld’s contacts proved to be well-informed about the situation at the western fronts and were eager to acquire new information.³⁶ Neufeld, as he writes, preferred short lectures together with question and answer sessions over the use of technical means; he also found that illustrated papers and periodicals more efficiently influenced the public.³⁷ It would be wrong, however, to conclude that people in Medina were opposed to progress. It was a scholar like al-Wamui who put the case for an education which would combine European scientific findings with religious knowledge. Another scholar made the point that the Bedouins were not yet ready for a European education, but required first of all religious education.³⁸ Neufeld was given information

³⁴ Medina was, for foreign powers, a “black hole”, a place from where they hardly received any information, see Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks*, p. 160.

³⁵ On Tunisi see Heine, Peter, “Sâlih ash-Sharîf at-Tûnisî, a North African nationalist in Berlin during the first world war”, *Revue de l’Occident musulman and de la Méditerranée* 33 (1982), pp. 89-95.

³⁶ They met sometimes in his flat, sometimes at the homes of influential personalities, e.g. in the house of Sa’id Ahmad al-Barzanji, who was one of the two muftis of Medina, one having been appointed by the *muhafiz* of Medina, the other by the Sharif of Mecca with the result that there were two muftis “plotting against each other” and dividing Medina into two camps, as Neufeld commented (“Tagebuch”, pp. 77-8).

³⁷ Al-Tunisi had received a film projector from the German Embassy in Istanbul which, however, could not be used due to the lack of films and as the administration of the *Haram al-Sharif* refused to provide electricity; at that time, the *Haram* was almost the only place in Medina which had electricity. Neufeld also argued that in the past gramophones had been forbidden and destroyed for religious reasons, Neufeld, “Diary”, pp. 55-6. Wavell, *A Modern Pilgrim in Mecca*, p. 69, however, reports that the gramophone was very popular in the Hijaz.

³⁸ About the lack of knowledge of prayer rites among Bedouins see Kiciman, *Medine Müdâfaası*, p. 116.

about the Bedouins in the Hijaz by Sheykh 'Umari, a native Moroccan, who lamented that the spreading of education and culture among the Bedouins was not so much impeded by the Ottomans, but by the inhabitants of Mecca and Medina and especially the Sharifians. It was the latter who did not wish a change of the living conditions of Bedouins because "...they [the city dwellers and the Sharifians, MS] could not make as much profit from the enlightened as from the ignorant and overly pious".³⁹ Neufeld also commented on the delicate triangle of the Sharif, the government and the Bedouins in which the Bedouins at long last had the whip hand.⁴⁰ One of the more important passages in his diary is concerned with the analysis of relations between Bedouins and townspeople in Medina which developed around their mutual benefits. Neufeld's stay in Medina ended abruptly when he was called back by Cemal Paşa on September 1, 1915. This did not come as a complete surprise to Neufeld. Although the Ottoman authorities had never been officially notified of Neufeld's mission, it could not long be kept a secret that a German, even long Arabized and a Muslim, stayed in Medina.

The Arab Revolt and its aftermath

The aim of the Arab Revolt (June 5, 1916) was the expulsion of the Ottomans from the Hijaz and Arabia and the establishment of an independent Arab state. This meant first of all taking Mecca and Medina where Ottoman garrisons were stationed.⁴¹ The strategic significance of Medina was that it constituted the terminus of the Hijaz Railway and was thereby linked with Damascus and, by extension, Istanbul. The garrison in Mecca was defeated within a month.⁴² In Medina things were more complicated. Faysal and 'Ali,

³⁹ Neufeld, "Diary", p. 72.

⁴⁰ Neufeld, "Diary", pp. 72-3.

⁴¹ In his papers Fakhri writes the following about the events leading to the revolt: "The government was not able to control the Emir's ambitions for superiority or curb his influence over the Bedouins...The Emir, under the pretext of calming the population held public gatherings from April 29 to May 3 and adjured the people to obey him. Afterwards people started to spread notions such as independence under English protection and driving the Turks from the Hijaz, and armed youth started to walk around Mecca. The Government, so to speak, shut its eyes vis-a-vis these rebellious actions in order not to cause more trouble. In consequence, no defensive or precautionary arrangements were taken. Therefore, the Government was confronted with the rebellion as a *fait accompli*".

⁴² According to Murphy, *The Arab Revolt*, pp. 33-4, the garrison in Mecca surrendered on 9 July 1916; Rogan, Eugene, *The Arabs. A History* (London: Allen Lane, 2009), p. 152, has June 12.

the Sharifian commanders, notified Fakhri on June 5 that they would break off relations with the Ottoman government. The offensive of the Sharifian troops on the railway near Medina was not only repulsed, but Ottoman forces even pursued their attackers. In late 1916 Fakhri Paşa felt strong enough to launch a full-scale assault threatening to recapture Yanbu 'al-Bahr and Rabigh. It was only due to the Royal Navy's support of the insurgents and logistical problems of Fakhri's forces that the advance came to a standstill; they had to retreat to Medina in mid-January 1917.

Not recognizing Husayn after his revolt, the Ottoman government appointed a new sharif.⁴³ The natural choice was Husayn's cousin 'Ali Haydar, a member of a rival clan. He was sent to Medina with the aim of placating the tribes who were tempted to go over to Husayn. He received the allegiance of 15,000 tribal warriors, but sent them home because he did not see how they could be equipped and supplied.⁴⁴

⁴³ On the other hand, it appears that at least until autumn 1917 the name of the Ottoman sultan and caliph continued to be mentioned in the *khutba* in Mecca, see Hartmann, Richard, *Die arabische Frage und das türkische Reich* (Halle a.d.S.: Gebauer-Schwetschke, 1919), p. 13 (Sonderabdruck aus Beiträge zur Kenntnis des Orients, 15). About the sojourn of 'Ali Haydar in Medina see Badr, *al-Tarikh al-shamil*, III, pp. 61-3.

⁴⁴ In a dispatch to the grand *vezir* in summer 1916 he wrote that food supplies were insufficient. Gold coins were required as paper money was useless due to British allowances made in gold. The words of a Bedouin sheikh uttered to 'Ali Haydar show how the loyalty of the tribes was sorely tried: "We promised to be loyal. Our country lies along the coast and we gave our word that we would guard the shores against the enemy. The seaboard will naturally be closed to us, so, if you do not give us food, how can we exist?" (Stitt, George, *A Prince of Arabia. The Emir Shereef Ali Haider* (London: G. Allen and Unwin, 1948), pp. 171-2). Neufeld who recognized that the Bedouins were a crucial factor in the equilibrium of powers in the Hijaz, penned three reports on "the revolt in the Hijaz" in autumn 1916, i.e. after his return from the Stotzingen mission. His attention was directed towards the government's erratic policy vis-à-vis the Bedouins. Tribes which should have been punished for misdeeds were instead rewarded. On the other hand, tribes who were loyal to the government were ignored or treated unfavourably. For Neufeld it was clear why the Bedouins had taken the side of Husayn since they had the choice "...between two fires: The Great Sharif with the hated arch enemies [Britain, MS] of their religion who now flattered them, but later could be shaken off with God's help as the Great Sharif promised...; on the other hand, Turkey with soldiers who oppressed them, stole their belongings and killed their fathers and brothers, without being able to hope to shake them off" (Politisches Archiv, Auswärtiges Amt, R 13879, K 196945). Neufeld promoted a new policy vis-à-vis the Bedouins. The government should buy camels from them and carry out a more just administration. In this respect the inhabitants of Medina could render precious service. After his return from the Stotzingen mission in the summer of 1916, Neufeld spoke in Damascus with people who had fled Medina. They complained about the "Turkish soldiers", and the excesses they had committed. "The Bedouins", Neufeld writes, "appreciate that the Ottoman commanders in the field do their utmost to stop these excesses, but their officers hardly support them in doing so".

Naturally, the British were at odds with the situation as the anticipated quick seizure of control in the Hijaz failed to materialize. As long as Medina was not conquered, the position of the Sharif as “King of Hijaz” was neither consolidated nor fully legitimized. At first there was a consensus among British officers that the “...fall of Medina was a necessary preliminary to any further progress of the Arab Revolt”. This opinion was challenged by Colonel Édouard Brémond, the chief of the French Military Mission in the Hijaz, who argued that it was much more useful to have the Ottomans stuck in Medina.⁴⁵ There were conflicting views concerning how to bring about the fall of Medina. Lawrence recommended a policy of pin-pricks through Bedouin attacks which would weaken the besieged forces in the long term. Interrupting the railroad between Damascus and Medina would considerably reduce the supplies for the city of the prophet and make the siege more effective.⁴⁶ Still, there were other voices among the British who thought that the conquest of Medina was necessary.⁴⁷ In fact, Lawrence realized earlier than others of his colleagues that the obsession to capture the city of the prophet was wrong and that, on the contrary, the advantage of having the Ottoman forces tied down there would outweigh the disadvantages of not capturing Medina.⁴⁸

‘Abdallah and Faysal, on the other hand, appeared anxious to conquer Medina right away. The British policy of weakening the Ottoman forces which had the advantage of tying down a large number of enemy troops became a trial of patience. Fakhri was certainly isolated. But the fact that Medina was not yet conquered, obstructed Husayn’s ambitions and British war aims. When after a year this strategy proved unsuccessful, more decisive action was agreed upon.⁴⁹

For various reasons – a lack of provisions and military effectiveness of the Bedouins – a large-scale attack on Medina could not be realized. There

⁴⁵ Lawrence, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, p. 135.

⁴⁶ So it dawned on Lawrence, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, p. 194: “...(I) wondered what on earth was the good of Medina to us?...Today we were blockading the railway, and they only defending it. The garrison of Medina, reduced to an inoffensive size, were sitting in trenches destroying their own power of movement by eating the transport they could no longer feed. We had taken away their power to harm us, and yet wanted to take away their town...”.

⁴⁷ The National Archives, London (hereafter TNA), FO 882/7, Wilson to Husayn ibn Ali, 29 June 1917, urging Husayn “...to make every effort to capture Medina...”.

⁴⁸ “We must not take Medina. The Turk was harmless there. In prison in Egypt he would cost us food and guards. We wanted him to stay at Medina...Our ideal was to keep his railway working, but only just, with the maximum of loss and discomfort...”, Lawrence, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, p. 232.

⁴⁹ Cf. Kedourie, “The surrender of Medina”, pp. 125 ff.

was also the fact that the Sharifians – contrary to their initial declarations that they wished to conquer Medina – remained rather inactive. On the one hand, they received huge subsidies and supplies from the British which would have been reduced or stopped after a capture of Medina. On the other hand, they were not as firmly in the saddle as they wanted to make people believe. In the south of their sphere of influence tribes threatened to renounce their loyalty to Husayn. The interior and east of the Peninsula (Najd) was under the control of the Wahhabi rivals from the Al Sa‘ud who – especially given their contacts with Fakhri – constituted a threat to the Sharifians. It was more important for the Sharif to meet the challenge to their claim for power than to drive the Ottomans out of Medina.⁵⁰ After all, the Arab revolt did not only aim at “throwing off the Ottoman yoke”, as Husayn ibn ‘Ali had declared, but also at the unification of all Arabs under the Sharifian flag and the suppression of the Wahhabi faith. By January 1917 it was clear that systematic raids on the railway would be more productive than a siege of Medina. But it was not until autumn 1917 that, due to a more sophisticated technique of mining trains, more tangible results were achieved. The capture of Aqaba in July 1917 and the British victories at Bi‘r al-Sab‘ (Beersheba) and Ghazza in September 1917 eventually changed the fortunes of war.⁵¹

Medina: siege, armistice, desertions, and surrender⁵²

Until mid 1917, the situation of the defenders of Medina was – at least for the time being – in no way hopeless. However, the Hijaz railway which

⁵⁰ When asked by Lawrence about his plans, Faysal said that “...till Medina fell they [the Sharifians, MS] were inevitably tied down there in Hejaz dancing to Fakhri’s tune”, Lawrence, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, p. 97.

⁵¹ For an overview of events see TNA, FO 882/7, 30 September 1918: *Summary of Hejaz Revolt*.

⁵² Events in Medina from the outbreak of the revolt to the surrender in January 1919 have hardly been dealt with in research, although they are not unknown. Already in 1922 Fakhri’s former loyal intelligence officer Naci Kaşif Kıcman had written a series of articles in the paper *Tercüman-ı Hakikat* about these events. It was only in 1971 that his memoirs were published in book form provided with many excerpts from documents summarized in English by Wasti, S. Tanvir, “The defence of Medina”, *Middle Eastern Studies* 27 (1991), 642-53. The reminiscences of another contemporary witness, Feridun Kandemir, appeared in 1974 (*Peygamberimizin Gölgesinde Son Türkler (Medine Müdafası)*, İstanbul: Yağmur Yayınevi). Towards the end of the 1960’s files from the Foreign Office and the Arab Bureau became accessible. These files were partially published and translated into Turkish by

served as an umbilical cord connecting Medina with Syria was threatened and in spring 1918 the line was destroyed between Ma'an and Tabuk. The last train with fresh troops arrived in early March 1918. The scope for action of Fakhri's soldiers extended only a few miles outside the town. A wide-ranging if incomplete confinement of Medina had begun.⁵³ But still supplies could be purchased from the Bedouins.⁵⁴ The rare Sharifian attacks provided Fakhri with the time and initiative to engage in building activities in the city. Streets were widened, the electrification was pushed forward and telephone lines were established.⁵⁵ Moreover, Fakhri managed to keep his men under control in spite of monotonous living conditions.

Meanwhile – in the first half of 1917 when Baghdad was already lost – the British advance at the theatre of war in Palestine continued. The German General Staff pleaded for a move of troops from the Hijaz to this section of the front as quickly as possible in order to halt the British attack. The Ottoman leadership, i.e. Enver and Cemal, hesitated at first because the voluntary surrender of one of the Holy Places in the middle of *jihad* would have had a devastating effect on public opinion. A march which was sung at the time in schools and in the army illustrates this: “We will not leave the one who rests in Medina [the Prophet Muhammad], we will rather die and rescue the motherland”.⁵⁶ Finally it was decided that Medina was to be evacuated because an improvement of the situation in Palestine was considered more important.⁵⁷

Salahi Sonyel, “İngiliz Belgelerine Göre Medine Müdafî Fahrettin Paşa”, *Belleten* 34/141-144 (1972), pp. 333-75. Several years later Kedourie analyzed the British sources in an article which till today is the best introduction to the subject although it does not refer to Turkish sources. The following remarks are based on the above-mentioned publications, British files from the National Archives, documents from the German Foreign Office, and the papers of Fakhri Paşa.

⁵³ Therefore, the word siege is to be taken with a grain of salt, cf. Falls, Cyril and A.F.Becke: *History of the Great War. Military Operations Egypt* (London: HMSO, 1930), vol. II, part 1, p. 237.

⁵⁴ The Bedouins received large quantities of supplies from the British and sold them at least partly to the Ottoman forces in Medina as Fakhri admitted in an interview with a British officer after surrender, *The Arab Bulletin* 110, 30 April 1919, p. 39.

⁵⁵ Kıcman, *Medine Müdâfaası*, pp. 120-121. Badr, *al-Tarikh al-shamil*, III, p. 48.

⁵⁶ Aydemir, Şevket Süreyya, *Makedonya'dan Ortaasya'ya Enver Paşa (1914-1922)*. vol. III (Istanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 1985), p. 271.

⁵⁷ Friedrich Freiherr Kress von Kressenstein, in charge of operations at the Suez Canal, came out in favour of the evacuation of the Yemen and Medina in view of British preparations for a large attack in Palestine, Politisches Archiv, Auswärtiges Amt, R 13880, 23 February 1917, K 197032 f; see also his *Mit den Türken zum Suezkanal* (Berlin: O. Schlegel, 1938). Officials in the German Foreign Office reflected on the “expected fall of Medina” arguing

In this context the replacement of Fakhri was contemplated. He was regarded as an excellent soldier who could motivate his troops, but in Istanbul they did not think highly of his political insight.⁵⁸ The names of two officers were being discussed as Fakhri's successors. Both were to determine the fortunes of the Turkish Republic over several decades, Lieutenant General Mustafa Kemal, the later Atatürk, and Colonel İsmet, who took on the family name İnönü. The latter was judged too inexperienced. Mustafa Kemal declined because he did not want to take command of a city which was to be vacated soon – as it appeared then.⁵⁹ So Fakhri remained at his post; moreover, he consistently refused to carry out the evacuation and persuaded Enver and Cemal to keep the forces in Medina.⁶⁰ Finally the decision was taken that the troops should remain in Medina. Contributing to the decision was the fact that a retreat along the railway would have been an extremely risky operation which could have resulted in the annihilation or capture of the Hijaz Expeditionary Force.

It is futile to speculate whether the intervention of Fakhri's troops in Palestine would have achieved anything. In any case, British forces took Jerusalem, the third holy city of Islam, in December 1917, in October 1918 Damascus was occupied peacefully. Still, the Sharifians remained rather passive regarding Medina. It was only in late August 1918 that Husayn bowed to British requests and sent a rather impolite letter to Fakhri with the demand that he surrender.⁶¹ Fakhri responded in kind.⁶² In late

that even "...the transport of the Prophet's Tomb to Jerusalem would not be able to uphold the fiction that the Sultan was still in possession of the Holy Cities..." (Politisches Archiv, Auswärtiges Amt, R 13880, 13 March 1917, K 197045 f.

⁵⁸ Kandemir, *Peygamberimizin Gölgesinde*, p. 67.

⁵⁹ Esin, Emel, *Mekka und Medina* (Frankfurt: Umschau, 1964), pp. 192-3. See also: Lord Kinross: *Atatürk. The Rebirth of a Nation* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1964), p. 103. Tezer, Şükrü, *Atatürk'ün Hatıra Defteri* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1972) (Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, XVI/16), pp. 101, 105.

⁶⁰ In his endeavours he was supported by 'Ali Haydar: Stitt, *A Prince of Arabia*, pp. 177-8. Haydar was recalled not even a year after his arrival. His farewell words to Fakhri were: "The protection of this Tomb [of the Prophet, MS] is in the hands of God, but you are His instrument. I leave it in your care. Be worthy of the trust" (Stitt, *A Prince of Arabia*, pp. 178-9). Fakhri wrote to Cemal on November 12, 1917, that the proposed evacuation of Medina "... might prove the dawn of the 'Fourth Age'". It is suggested that this term referred to a Muslim tradition that "...when the 'Third Age' comes to an end the Turkish Empire will cease the predominant position in Islam" (Hogarth, *Summary of Hejaz Revolt*, included in TNA, FO 882/7, 30 September 1918).

⁶¹ TNA, FO 371/3393, attached to correspondence High Commissioner for Egypt to Balfour, 31st August 1918.

⁶² TNA, FO 371/3393, included in Wingate to Balfour, September 26, 1918. Fakhri addressed his response to Husayn "To Him who broke the power of Islam" and related a dream in which

September Wingate, too, urged Fakhri to surrender.⁶³ The general gave the pithy answer: "I am an Ottoman. I am a Muslim. I come from the family of Balioğlu. I am a soldier".⁶⁴ When Fakhri reported this note to the capital, Enver reaffirmed him in his intention, writing that he had been appointed not to surrender, but to defend Medina "...up to the last bullet and the last man". Fakhri responded with grim humour: "Yes, Sir, but not up to the last date!"⁶⁵

Indeed, this was an allusion to supply problems which were continuously increasing. In June 1918 soldiers received 200 g. of bread, 30 g. of meat and dates daily. Rations were reduced further and soldiers became weaker day by day. When supplies no longer arrived, means of communication were interrupted and provisions were nearly exhausted, Fakhri and his men were a forlorn and almost forgotten flock, Medina a besieged enclave.

The military resistance of the Ottoman empire and its German ally collapsed in October 1918. On October 30 the armistice agreement was signed in Mudros. The agreement provided for complete and unconditional surrender, the immediate opening of the Straits, demobilization of the Ottoman armies and takeover of strategically important installations by the Entente. At the beginning of November the triumvirate consisting of Talat, Enver and Cemal fled. The government was now headed by Grand Vezir Tefvik Paşa who was willing to collaborate with the Entente powers.

The Ottoman garrison in Medina learned about these events only with a delay and in a fragmentary way.⁶⁶ In clause 16 of the armistice agreement it was laid down that the Ottoman garrisons in the Hijaz, Asir and Yemen were to yield to the next Allied commander. On November 6 the stipulations were sent to Fakhri in a directive from the grand *vezir* and minister of war, Ahmed İzzet Paşa.⁶⁷ Since communications with headquarters in

the Prophet told Fakhri to follow him. He ended with these lines: "As I am now under the protection of the Prophet and most high commander, I am busying myself with strengthening the defences and the building of roads and squares in Medina. I beg you not to trouble me with useless requests". Fakhri always responded to letters of the Sharifians through Garland because for him they were rebels, Fakhri papers.

⁶³ The letter was sent through Husayn: TNA, FO 882/7, included in Wingate to Balfour, 26th September 1918.

⁶⁴ Fakhri papers. Kedourie, "The surrender of Medina", p. 132.

⁶⁵ Fakhri papers, 3.9.18. Kıcıman, *Medine Müdâfaası*, p. 340.

⁶⁶ Fakhri admitted in a speech to his soldiers probably in late November that he had concealed the news about the armistice and the surrender demands because he "...did not want to create disturbance...and to burden [them] with ill-omened news which could not be distinguished from rumours and baseless talks", Fakhri papers.

⁶⁷ Fakhri papers; TNA, FO 882/7 (369) in English translation.

Medina no longer functioned, a British radio station sent the message with the order to surrender *en clair*, i.e. not encoded. Fakhri did not rule out a British stratagem. Furthermore, for him it was dubious who the Allied commander mentioned in the text was. He regarded neither the commanders of the Sharifians, 'Abdallah and 'Ali, nor Captain Garland, the British liaison officer in the Hijaz, as allied commanders. Fakhri's mistrust of the radio message was largely justified, as British observers later admitted.⁶⁸ On the other hand, the British thought it to be delaying tactics when Fakhri questioned the authenticity of the encoded order, later transmitted by the Ottoman government because it did not contain a signature and authentication. That Fakhri was playing for time became apparent when he sent back a messenger from Garland (from Yanbu' al-Bahr, a four day's journey) remarking that he was unable to meet him as he was busy with the celebrations of the Prophet's birthday.⁶⁹

Thereupon an emissary, Captain Ziya, was sent from Istanbul with instructions for Fakhri. The Ottoman Government was warned that the fortresses at the Dardanelles would be razed if Fakhri did not comply with the armistice conditions. As the envoy arrived in Yanbu' al-Bahr only on the day of the deadline, an extension of three days was granted. On December 18 Ziya, a former adjutant of Fakhri and now aide-de-camp to General Chief of Staff Cevad Şakir Paşa, reached Medina, handing over the signed eviction order of the minister of war and a statement that the general would be regarded as a mutineer if he continued to disobey orders.⁷⁰

Whoever had expected that the *paşa* would eventually obey was wrong. Ziya returned to Yanbu' al-Bahr with a new demand from Fakhri. Now he said he required an *irade*, i.e. a decree of the sultan, in order to surrender the city.⁷¹ In a meeting with his commanding officers, chief of staff Emin

⁶⁸ Fakhri papers. See also *The Arab Bulletin* 108, January 11, 1919, p. 6; *The Arab Bulletin* 110, April 30, 1919, p. 43.

⁶⁹ Fakhri papers; *The Arab Bulletin* 108, January 11, 1919, p. 6.

⁷⁰ TNA, FO 882/7, Garland to Wilson, December 26th 1918; the way Fakhri dealt with the dispatch from Istanbul clearly reveals his delaying tactics; British observers adopted the assessment of Ziya that Fakhri's actions were determined by his fanaticism: "He [Ziya, MS] describes FAKHRI as a thorough fanatic and says he has instilled into his forces a discipline more strict than he has ever met with in all his service with the Turkish Army. Fakhri Pasha every Friday goes to the HARAM and puts [on?, MS] a sacred robe of Fatma. The officers and men file past him kissing the garment...There seems no doubt that FAKHRI has developed a violent fanatical insanity...".

⁷¹ TNA, FO 882/7, 29 December 1918. In his papers Fakhri writes: "We could have held Medina until August [1919, MS], because we had procured our needs for another six months. Even if our perseverance in Medina did not result in any gains at the negotiating table, our

and Colonel Ali Necib, he justified his decision by expressing the view that Medina came directly under the jurisdiction of the sultan/caliph. He, Fakhri, was the custodian of the Prophet's Tomb and did not want to run the risk of being cursed by the Muslim world if he had to hand over the city to a British officer, an unbeliever. Equally, Medina could not be surrendered to the Sharifians as they were rebels. He argued that the armistice agreement incorrectly referred to the Hijaz and not the independent *sancak* of Medina so that the city was not part of the agreement. Moreover, Fakhri warned against acting precipitately. Until the arrival of the *irade* Medina could be used as a security at the peace negotiations.⁷² With this argumentation he was able to change Ali Necib's mind, who initially had tended towards surrender. Emin, however, insisted that the city should be evacuated.

Fakhri and his chief of staff broke off with one another.⁷³ Together with several like-minded officers Emin founded a so-called "Central Committee" in whose name a declaration entitled "Let us wake up!" (December 28, 1918) was published. The "Committee" argued in favour of surrender: Firstly, the armistice was almost synonymous with a peace agreement. Secondly, the Ottoman army was demobilized and an Arab

weapons would not fall into the hands of the enemy...and we would not have to accept the degradation of walking like a herd of geese to the prisoners camp in Egypt. Furthermore, I could not accept that the weapons we had protected with our sacrifices would have to be laid down at the feet of barelegged bedouins and a captain [Garland, MS] who had insulted our honour. Based on my belief that you [Fakhri's men, MS] would trust me and would support me I have written the following letter [not contained in the papers] to Abdullah Pasha..." "I told Ziya to relate the following verbally to Abdullah Paşa: ...It is true that due to illness and the climate the soldiers have been worn down... Neither razing the fortifications of Çanakkale nor even the occupying allied powers turning Istanbul upside down will change my sacred decision. I add that none of us here have in any way been carried away or involved in political movements or displayed any party preference. I will not accept the surrender and evacuation of Medina without an irade from the sultan. I will not obey any other orders. If, against my determination, the allies and the rebels will use force against us, we will respond with gratitude and conviction..."

⁷² In his papers Fakhri reproduces his words to his men: "Armistice does not mean peace. As a matter of fact, commanders who have inflicted death upon each others' armies can sign oppressive armistice terms in order to boost the honour of their soldiers. But such terms can always be made more bearable and reasonable at the negotiating table in peace talks, especially if various and even neutral states are involved".

⁷³ Fakhri in his papers states the following: "After that [i.e. December 24, the mission of Ziya, MS] rumours started to circulate among the officers in Medina and signs of dissatisfaction were observed. The chief of staff, Emin, became the instigator of this affair. A programme of revolt aiming at the removal of the commander and the surrender of Medina was drawn up..."

government had been set up in Damascus. Thirdly, the *irade* which Fakhri had demanded was unnecessary since the government was responsible for such a decision. Even if the *paşa* obtained such an *irade*, he would not surrender.⁷⁴ Fourthly, one could not permit that thousands of Muslims be condemned to a senseless death, something which was forbidden by the Quran. If they were to die, then at home and not as rebels against the Government.⁷⁵

Indeed, the situation in Medina had become hopeless. It was not that there had been a lack of weapons or ammunition, but rather, if the siege had continued, there would soon not have been any soldiers alive or at least strong enough to operate the ample supply of weapons.⁷⁶ Due to the insufficient diet soldiers were prone to illnesses.⁷⁷ Many of them fell victim to the Spanish influenza.⁷⁸ During the months of November and December 1918 and the first half of January 1919 more than one tenth of the garrison died. The garrison's doctors had reported the poor constitution of his men to Fakhri. But his inaccessibility did not allow him to form a realistic picture of the soldiers' mood.⁷⁹

⁷⁴ A further explanation of Fakhri's obstinacy could be that he was a supporter of the nationalists/Kemalists who were opposed to the armistice conditions. This is suggested in a chapter of Fakhri's papers, penned by his opponents.

⁷⁵ Fakhri Paşa papers; Kıcınan, *Medine Müdâfaası*, pp. 409-15; Kandemir, *Peygamberimizin Gölgesinde*, pp. 188-96; *The Arab Bulletin* 110, April 30, 1919, pp. 46-7. In one of the chapters (probably penned by Emin) in Fakhri's papers his opponents state: "The only reason why the Hijaz Expeditionary Force which until now has stood its ground firmly and united against the enemy, has disintegrated within one week and been transformed into this condition, must be sought among the officers rather than the ordinary soldiers". The morale of the former, continues the statement, had been completely broken because they had not received any news about their families or current events at home: "The morale of the officers was broken more than that of the ordinary soldiers, because the latter were not able to assess the situation in a comprehensive way". Cf. also Kıcınan, *Medine Müdâfaası*, pp. 195-6: first, ordinary Arab, then Turkish soldiers started to desert.

⁷⁶ Moreover, there was not enough fodder for animals, the camel and mule regiments could no longer use their animals because they were too weak to pull heavy weaponry, Fakhri papers.

⁷⁷ The garrison was "on the verge of starvation at the end of December", not necessarily because there were no more supplies, but because they had been extremely stretched on Fakhri's order, see *The Arab Bulletin* 110, April 30, 1919, p. 40.

⁷⁸ A pandemic in 1918/19 which during several months killed many millions and was particularly lethal on the battlefields of World War I.

⁷⁹ *The Arab Bulletin* 110, April 30, 1919, p. 48. The deputy head physician of the Hijaz Expeditionary Corps, a certain Kemal, wrote in a memo (December 22/23, 1918) to Fakhri that 30-50 soldiers were dying every day and that most units were in no condition to march, Fakhri papers.

The manifesto of the Central Committee under the leadership of Emin constituted the turning point in the defense of Medina. The demands for capitulation and the orders of the minister of war, Fakhri's delaying tactics and refusal, the news about the situation at home, exhaustion and despair resulted in the mutiny and desertions of several army units within one week.

But there were still many officers and men who stood by the *paşa*. Whereas Emin and several units had laid down their arms and gone to the Sharifian headquarters at Bi'r Darwish, Fakhri issued three declarations in which he tried to refute the accusations raised against him in the manifesto and to induce the garrison to hold out against the enemy. His third appeal to his troops, reflecting his physical and psychological condition,⁸⁰ seemed helpless and hopeless.⁸¹

On January 3, 1919, the loyal Ali Necib pointing out the desertions and the appalling condition of the soldiers, tried to persuade Fakhri to yield. The general retorted that he would not negotiate with the "rebels", but continued: "If you wish, you can go".⁸² A four member delegation, headed by Ali Necib, went to 'Abdullah's camp in order to negotiate the surrender and evacuation of Medina. Still, Fakhri continued to refuse the Sharifians' demand for personal capitulation. Nevertheless, the surrender agreement was signed on January 7, 1919. According to clause 2, the general was to hand over the city within 48 hours.⁸³ On the morning of January 9, 1919, the delegation returned to Medina in order to persuade the stubborn *paşa* to accept the capitulation. Meanwhile, Fakhri had retired to the prophet's tomb. There he was finally arrested by his own men. They allowed him to lay down his sword at Fatima's tomb.⁸⁴ On January 10 he arrived at 'Abdallah's headquarters, where he was welcomed respectfully.⁸⁵

⁸⁰ He suffered from arthritis and had an attack of Spanish influenza. A British officer, who interviewed Fakhri after surrender, found that "...illness, melancholia and religious fanaticism brought him to a state verging on insanity", *The Arab Bulletin* 110, April 30, 1919, p. 44. Emin wrote or told his fellow conspirators: "I have only one conviction and that is that your commander has lost his mind. He has become temporarily insane", Fakhri papers.

⁸¹ Fakhri wrote: "Did we not come here together, so should we not leave together?", Kıcıman, *Medine Müdâfaası*, p. 428.

⁸² Kıcıman, *Medine Müdâfaası* p. 432. Fakhri later officially assigned command to Ali Necib.

⁸³ Kıcıman, *Medine Müdâfaası*, p. 438.

⁸⁴ Esin, *Mekka und Medina*, p. 193.

⁸⁵ Fakhri was "depressed and angry", as 'Abdallah remarked in his memoirs: Graves, *Memoirs of King Abdullah*, p. 177; *Mudhakkirat* (approx. 1965), p. 141; 'Abdallah's negotiations and meetings with Fakhri can be found in Graves, *Memoirs of King Abdullah*, pp. 174-80.

Three days later the Ottoman minister of justice, Ali Haydar Efendi (Arsebük, 1853-1935),⁸⁶ who had been dispatched from Istanbul after the failure of Ziya's mission, arrived in Medina. He brought with him the *irade* of the sultan to surrender the city to the Amir of Mecca, Husayn.⁸⁷ Finally, Fakhri had his way. On January 18, 1919, the Peace Conference of Versailles was opened, in which Faysal took part as Arab delegate. The evacuation of the Hijaz Expeditionary Force, which still numbered approx. 8,000 men, to Yanbu' al-Bahr was completed within four weeks.

The city of the prophet: from garrison to ghost town

There are several uncertainties surrounding the size of the population in Medina.⁸⁸ Pre-war figures put the population at up to 80,000. Pilgrims coming to Medina did in many cases stay on and in this way the population increased at times without always being reflected in the official figures.⁸⁹ Several sources attest that during the war, especially through the years of siege, most of the population fled from the besieged

A photograph of Fakhri surrendering to 'Abdallah in Bi'r Darwish, which is kept at the Imperial War Museum, is reproduced in Winstone, H.V.F., *The Diaries of Parker Pasha* (London-Melbourne-New York: Quatern Books, 1983), unpaginated. There were two interviews conducted with Fakhri revealing further details of the events in Medina and his motives in refusing to surrender; the one was with Captain Bassett, in TNA, FO 882/20, January 17, 1919; the other with Captain Garland, his former opponent, at the Qasr al-Nil Barracks in Cairo, where the *paşa* was detained, TNA, FO 882/20, April 6, 1919; *The Arab Bulletin* 110, 30 April 1919, p. 33.

⁸⁶ In the Turkish sources he is usually called Haydar Molla Bey, see e.g. Kıcıman, *Medine Müdâfaası*, p. 475.

⁸⁷ After the arrival of Ali Haydar Efendi carrying the *irade*, Fakhri comments in his papers: "Finally the inevitable had happened".

⁸⁸ Pertinent information about Medina can be found in the following publications: Behrens, Marcel, *"Ein Garten des Paradieses". Die Prophetenmoschee von Medina* (Würzburg: Ergon, 2007) (Mitteilungen zur Sozial- und Kulturgeschichte der islamischen Welt, 24), especially pp. 44-8. See also Werner Ende on a particular section of Medina's population "The Nakhâwila, a Shiite community in Medina, past and present", *Die Welt des Islams* 37/3 (1997), 263-348. I am indebted to Professor Ende for pointing out to me several Arabic publications concerning Medina.

⁸⁹ Wavell noted for late 1908 a population of 30,000 not counting troops and pilgrims, Batanuni put the population in 1910 at 60,000, while Philby estimated their number at 80,000 on the eve of World War I, Winder, R.B., "al-Madina", *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*: P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs (eds.) (Leiden: Brill, 2006), Vol. V, p. 999.

city or that the number of the civilian population dwindled to almost none.⁹⁰

In April 1917 Fakhri Paşa issued a declaration which left it up to the inhabitants whether they wanted to stay in the city provided that they did not ask for provisions from the military. Whoever was not willing to put up with war and famine could go wherever they wanted to go.⁹¹ As a matter of fact, in the following months a considerable part of the population left for the east; others were taken gratis together with their household belongings to Syria. Indeed, there are indications that thousands fled to Syria, Anatolia, and to other parts of the Hijaz.⁹² In this way 70,000 inhabitants, visitors and “residents” (*mujawir*) were gradually dispersed over several months. It is difficult to reconcile the sheer numbers of refugees and the problems of transporting them to the north and accommodating them there with the then prevailing possibilities of travel even if we suppose that most left before the railway was seriously disrupted. The main reasons for this massive flight were: the conditions which prevailed due to the military having taken over the city completely; the city being fortified against possible attacks; the lack of food supplies due to the interruption of the Railway, and seizure of supplies by the Ottoman army. In the summer of 1918 the garrison of Medina “...had by now usurped the functions of the local inhabitants who had practically all been evicted from the district”.⁹³

⁹⁰ Musil, *Zur Zeitgeschichte von Arabien*, pp. 35-6. Medina was evacuated from the civil population in spring 1917. Kıcıman, *Medine Müdâfaası*, pp. 108-9, pp. 119-20, states that in 1917 the population had decreased from 70,000 to approx. 2,000-3,000. According to Fakhri, the population of Medina amounted to 40,000 before the war, but had already decreased to 20,000 at the time when he took command of the city, *The Arab Bulletin* 110, 30 April 1919, p. 46. One of the members of the above-mentioned Young Turk delegation to Medina (October-November 1916) put the number of inhabitants at 30,000 to 35,000; according to his account, soldiers were not very visible in the city; the visit took place during a campaign of Fakhri with the *paşa* being absent, Feldmann, *Reise*, pp. 69-78. When the Sharifian forces entered the city in mid-January 1919, they counted 600 civilians: *The Arab Bulletin* 110, 30 April 1919, p. 46. Badr, *al-Tarikh al-shamîl*, III, p. 82, counts only 41 souls towards the end of the siege.

⁹¹ Kıcıman, *Medine Müdâfaası*, pp. 107-8; Fakhri papers.

⁹² There are many archival records relating to the mass flight of the population in the Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, Osmanlı Arşivi (Hereafter BOA), e.g. the authorities announced that 30,000 to 40,000 people would arrive in Syria from Medina (BOA, DH.ŞFR Dosya 548, Gömlek 63 18 Ma 1333/1917); this item is included in the online catalogue, but I have not seen the document itself; the authorities emphasized the need for provisioning the refugees.

⁹³ “Summary of Hejaz Revolt”, by David Hogarth, included in TNA, FO 882/7, 30 Sept. 1918.

In this context the recollections of 'Ali Hafiz, a native of Medina, deserve mention.⁹⁴ He paints a bleak picture of a city ruled in line with military requirements, including confiscations and deportations. In 1917 and 1918 basic food stuffs such as dates, rice and wheat were stored at army depots. The inhabitants of the city could only get food by smuggling. Those apprehended buying or selling in this manner were punished severely. Fakhri resorted to the measure of deportation because he wanted to have the civilian population out of the city and avoid the danger of starvation. In such a way many people were forced to leave for Syria, Lebanon and Turkey, some chose to flee to Mecca. However, there were still civilians in Medina who, due to the lack of foodstuffs, fed themselves on cats and dogs⁹⁵ and even human corpses sold by criminals as normal meat suggesting cases of cannibalism.⁹⁶ Perhaps the only positive thing 'Ali Hafiz has to say about the deportation campaign is that people who left were given allowances and provisions. He mentions that the "cruelty of the siege" led several people to sell their properties for "a sack of rice". 'Ali Hafiz's family left Medina for Syria at the start of the mass deportations before the climax of the siege. He remembers (he was then approx. eight years old since he was born in 1909) that his father bought wheat at an excessive price and ground it at home and then hid the flour in the house when soldiers came for searches.⁹⁷ In this way his family was able to survive until they left Medina.⁹⁸

Unsurprisingly Fakhri's administration of Medina is praised in the relevant Turkish sources.⁹⁹ What is remarkable is that it is also seen positively by his enemies or rather former enemies. The report by Sadiq Yahya, a colonel in the Egyptian Army, who arrived with the Sharifian Forces in Medina

⁹⁴ *Fusul min al-tarikh al-Madina al-Munawwara* (Jidda, no date), pp. 41-2.

⁹⁵ Kıcıman, *Medine Müdâfaası*, p. 138, suggests that cats and dogs had disappeared from the streets because even they did not find enough food to survive.

⁹⁶ Cf. Badr, *al-Tarikh al-shamil*, III, pp. 71-73, about the "famine".

⁹⁷ Similar reports by Badr, *al-Tarikh al-shamil*, III, p. 57.

⁹⁸ 'Ali Hafiz (p. 42) does not close his eyes to the sufferings of the Turkish soldiers; he mentions that many of them died of hunger and diseases. Another local of Medina, by the name of 'Abd al-Majid al-Sa'idi, mentioned to Eldon Rutter during his visit (1926) to Medina the mass flight of the city's inhabitants and spoke positively about Fakhri's rule, Rutter, Eldon, *The Holy Cities of Arabia*. Vol. II. London and New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1928), pp. 251-2. 'Ali Haydar (Stitt, *A Prince of Arabia*, pp. 174-5) has an interesting story about merchants allegedly hoarding or hiding provisions. When this rumour came to Cemal's ears, he stopped sending supplies before being informed by Haydar that the rumour was a complete fabrication.

⁹⁹ The books by Kıcıman and Kandemir are good examples of the stylization of Fakhri as a hero, something which continues today in occasional Turkish newspaper articles.

on January 15, 1919, is a case in point.¹⁰⁰ The report addressed first of all the alleged wanton destruction and spoliation of which Fakhri was accused, clearing the general of this suspicion.¹⁰¹

According to the report, the *Haram al-Sharif* was “in good order”; ammunition (but no weapons) had been stored at the mosque. Destruction and construction works at the *Haram* took place in line with legal regulations. One fourth of the supplies which came into the city in the months preceding the surrender, i.e. at a time of extreme scarcity of foodstuffs, were sold to civilians. Fakhri also attended to agriculture (palm groves, wheat) at the outskirts of Medina in order to augment the poor supply brought in from elsewhere. Sadiq Yahya contrasts these remarks with the observations he made during the entry of the Sharifian forces, apparently pained by what he saw. Most of the houses, whose number he put at around 4,850 and which had been sealed by the Ottoman forces, were broken open and looted, even the ones inhabited by their owners. Stolen furniture from the houses was sold at the *suq*. In the looting not only Bedouins took part, but also many “Baghdadi and Syrian officers”. ‘Abdullah and ‘Ali were informed about the looting, but did not take any measures to stop it. Sadiq Yahya also complains that the supplies at the army depots had been stolen so that the Ottoman prisoners of war now being taken to Yanbu‘ al-Bahr had to survive with less or no supplies at all. The impression from the report is that Fakhri was able to maintain law and order in the city, whereas the Sharifians were not, or did not want to. Sadiq Yahya concluded that “the natives of Medina lost more during the first 12 days of the Arab occupation than they did during the two years it was in the hands of Fakhri Pasha”.

But strangely, inspite of all the looting and breakdown of public security as witnessed by Sadiq Yahya, “the inhabitants with whom he spoke, “...were pleased to receive the Arab government: they were very glad to feel that the days of starvation were at an end: that the clouds of distress and despair

¹⁰⁰ Kedourie “The surrender of Medina”, (pp. 134-7) deserves credit for having drawn attention to the report. The report of Sadiq Yahya is attached to TNA, FO 141/438, High Commissioner [Reginald Wingate] to Earl Curzon, June 26, 1919. A somewhat shorter version can be found in *The Arab Bulletin* 113, 17 July 1919, pp. 124-7 and *The Arab Bulletin* 112, 24 June 1919, pp. 90-1.

¹⁰¹ If destruction took place due to military considerations, committees consisting of locals oversaw the relevant measures and determined the amount of compensation. The same procedure was applied in cases in which the owner of a building was absent. The work of these special committees appointed by Fakhri was overseen by the Shar‘iyya court. When the military required certain items, houses and shops which had been abandoned and locked by their proprietors were opened, but sealed afterwards and lists of the confiscated items drawn up with a view to reimburse the owners.

had dispersed, and that a prosperous future seemed possible”.¹⁰² These inhabitants probably viewed the ugly scenes of looting only as a temporary phenomenon. But, as Sadiq Yahya also remarked, there was one class of the population, the “upper class of people, the landlords etc.” who praised “Turkish” administration in the past and viewed “...the future with alarm and doubt...fearing ...that there will be no justice nor equality, no rest nor respect for anybody” under Sharifian rule.

Given these impressions it is somewhat irritating or even confusing that it was Fakhri’s personal physician, Dr Şevket, who in his diary sowed doubts about the allegedly orderly administration and maintenance of public security during the siege.¹⁰³ But if the authorities charged with the upkeep of public order did not have the means to enforce a curfew, it is doubtful that administration was as orderly as maintained by other sources. Probably the underlying reasons for this – at least – temporary breakdown of public order – was the enormous pressure and tension prevailing in the garrison due to illness, food scarcity and a general “uncertainty of the future”. The picture which emerges is one of deprivation, a lack of recreation¹⁰⁴ and introversion.¹⁰⁵ It was this situation which ultimately led to a decrease in military obedience and desertions.¹⁰⁶ Malaria and dysentery were the most

¹⁰² Cf. note 100.

¹⁰³ *The Arab Bulletin* 110, 30 April 1919, pp. 36-42, has a summary of the diary; the diary itself is apparently not in the FO files: “There appear to have been spasmodic outbreaks of hooliganism. On May 2, 1918, Dr. Şevket records that a twelve-year-old child had been killed; and he states that owing to shortage of the necessaries of life murders were of almost daily occurrence. In an entry a short time later he returns to the subject in connection with the murder and robbery of a soldier coming from the Kuba Mosque. ‘There must’, he said, ‘be a gang of brigands in the city. Orders have been given that no one is to go out at night except in circumstances of absolute necessity’”.

¹⁰⁴ Not even the ‘*id al-adha* festival in September 1918 could lift the spirits of the troops, *The Arab Bulletin* 110, 30 April 1919, p. 38.

¹⁰⁵ Fakhri after his detainment admitted that he had not spoken “...hardly a word to anyone for two months”, although this is certainly an exaggeration (given that he had conversations with Ziya and his staff) and perhaps also restricted to the *paşa*, *The Arab Bulletin* 110, 30 April 1919, p. 48. Such symptoms are frequently reported in World War I experience, see Strohmeier, Martin, “Monumentalism versus realism: aspects of the First World War in Turkish literature”, in *The First World War as Remembered in the Countries of the Eastern Mediterranean*, Olaf Farschid, Manfred Kropp and Stephan Daehne (eds.) (Beirut: Orient Institut, 2006, pp. 297-319 (Beiruter Texte und Studien, 99).

¹⁰⁶ Kıcıman, *Medine Müdâfaası*, p. 195: “There was one disease which corroded and crushed the Hijaz Expeditionary Force: desertion”. He adds that this “disease” had first appeared among the Arab soldiers and then spread to Turkish soldiers; he thinks that it was “to a certain extent understandable” in the case of the Arabs, but “shameful” in the case of the Turks.

common diseases before the arrival of the most deadly, namely Spanish influenza which claimed the lives of roughly 1,050 soldiers and turned the hospitals, as Dr Şevket remarked, into “death factories”.¹⁰⁷ Emin, the ring leader of the conspiracy against Fakhri, calculated that, if the high death rate continued, the whole garrison would be decimated in two months. This made him all the more determined to bring an end to the suffering.

Withdrawal, the “oblivion of the human mind”, and the legendary Fakhri Paşa

The withdrawal of the Ottoman forces from Medina and its outlying districts initially gave the British officers cause for concern. First of all, local Bedouin tribes had not been paid by the Sharif for several months and were therefore dissatisfied and unruly. They were hostile to Ottoman deserting units and had attacked and robbed them. However, as it happened, these fears proved exaggerated. Soldiers were concentrated in Medina, where they handed in their weapons, and then transported by camels in eight groups of approximately 1,000 men each to Yanbu‘ al-Bahr. From there they were transferred to various detention camps in Egypt.¹⁰⁸

While the Sharifians gave their armies, including the Bedouins, free rein during their entry to Medina, where looting lasted for at least two weeks, they treated certain individuals such as Fakhri after his arrival in Bi‘r Darwish with utmost politeness. Equally obliging was their attitude towards the members of the Ottoman medical mission who stayed in Medina until early September 1919.

After the withdrawal of the Hijaz Expeditionary Force a team of the *Hilal-i Ahmar*, the Red Crescent, continued its work at the military hospital in Medina. It consisted of three doctors, a pharmacist, and several medical orderlies and administrators. They were charged with caring for the sick and wounded and, after their recovery, handing them over to the Sharifian forces. It is this group of people, i.e. patients and staff at the hospital, which Kandemir calls “the last Turks in the shadow of our Prophet”. After several

¹⁰⁷ *The Arab Bulletin* 110, 30 April 1919, p. 39.

¹⁰⁸ According to official Ottoman figures, the entire Hijaz Expeditionary Force numbered around 11,000 men in November 1918. Approx. 1,050 of the 11,000 died in December and January, 100 *en route* to the coast, and 300 remained hospitalized in Medina. The rest, roughly 1,500 men, most of whom were Arabs, remained in Medina or returned to their respective home places, *The Arab Bulletin* 110, 30 April 1919, pp. 34-5.

years of hostilities the relations with the Sharifians were surprisingly good. The ice between the Turks and the new masters in Medina melted quickly, as they invited each other to their particular versions of Arab and Turkish coffee. Concerning the speedy transition in relations between the former enemies, Kandemir observed: "The human being is strange, and the human memory is afflicted by oblivion".¹⁰⁹ The Turks were able to stroll through Medina and mix with the locals, enjoying full respect. After the takeover of the Sharifians Medina underwent a sudden change, writes Kandemir. The city immediately filled with Medinese returning from the places where they had fled during the war; within a week the population increased tenfold.¹¹⁰ Almost overnight the *suq* boasted of many products which had not been seen for years, from canned pineapple over Swiss chocolate to English field glasses. There developed almost a kind of tourism centered on Fakhri, with people visiting places where the *paşa* had stayed and worked. Only a few weeks after his departure, the general had become a legendary and awe-inspiring figure, giving rise to all kinds of sayings. When once a Bedouin's horse drank water and shied, the owner said to his animal: "What happened? Did you see Fakhri in the trough?" Bedouins who wanted their children to be as brave as the *paşa*, called their new born boys Fakhri.¹¹¹ In the first days of September 1919 the Red Crescent delegation left Medina on one of the first trains after the railway had been repaired.¹¹²

Conclusion

Let us conclude with a brief assessment of the war years in Medina. The war was not very much in evidence in terms of fighting. The fact that Medina, two and a half years after the outbreak of the Arab Revolt, was still under government control, was at least partially Fakhri's accomplishment, although of doubtful value. What induced his stubborn refusal to surrender

¹⁰⁹ Kandemir, *Peygamberimizin Gölgesinde*, pp. 254 ff.

¹¹⁰ Cf. also Badr, *al-Tarikh al-shamil*, III, pp. 115-16, for the quick return of the émigrés.

¹¹¹ Kandemir, *Peygamberimizin Gölgesinde*, pp. 259-61. These people did not know that Fakhri did not hold Bedouins in high esteem, as evidenced in his papers where he speaks about "bare-legged" Bedouins suggesting they had a low level of civilization. Sources imply that Fakhri held Arabs in general "in supreme contempt", *The Arab Bulletin* 109, 6 February 1919, p. 18. On the other hand, when Fakhri was congratulated by a Bedouin for his valiant defense of Medina, he told 'Abdallah that he considered this a "great honour", Graves, *Memoirs of King Abdullah*, p. 178.

¹¹² Kıcınan, *Medine Müdâfaası*, pp. 297 ff.

and what did he achieve by playing for time considering an earlier surrender would probably have saved the lives of many soldiers? Fakhri knew that the war was lost, but he believed that the oppressive armistice conditions should not be accepted unless they were modified. Uncertainty prevails regarding the role of Ziya, the envoy from Istanbul. The Arab Bureau, the British secret service centre for the Middle East in Cairo, suspected that Ziya – with the knowledge of the Ottoman Supreme Command - had encouraged Fakhri to endure.¹¹³ Or did he – quite the contrary – confirm Fakhri's opponents in their intention to surrender Medina? In Fakhri's papers there is no evidence for these speculations.

It is possible that for Fakhri the Government in Istanbul was only a puppet in the hands of the allied occupying powers. Furthermore, he felt bound to the order of Enver to defend the city although the triumvirate had fled in November.

In a conversation with a high-ranking British officer during his internment Fakhri assured him that he would have surrendered immediately if he had received the sultan's decree earlier.¹¹⁴ On the other hand, it cannot be ruled out that Fakhri's arrest by his own men was stage-managed with his consent in order to spare him the humiliation of surrendering Medina to the Sharifians.

Fakhri's religious sentiments are beyond doubt. He derived his determination from his role as "custodian of the Prophet's Tomb". Perhaps he hoped that this position would grant him a quasi-international status and he could therefore avoid imprisonment. Moreover, his patriotic and military honour did not allow him to go down in the annals of history as the Turkish officer who had given up the city of the Prophet. Seen in this way, the evocative title given to Fakhri by an Arab scholar is not entirely inappropriate: "the last knight of the last caliphs".¹¹⁵

A general with his almost forgotten army, determined to stand by the Prophet's grave until death; defeated not by the enemy, but victim of insubordination and conspiracy to whose originators now stuck the odium of betrayal. All these aspects contributed to the myth of a hero who united in his person endurance, patriotism and religious commitment.

¹¹³ *The Arab Bulletin* 109, 6 February 1919, p. 19.

¹¹⁴ That appears doubtful as even after the arrival of that decree Fakhri made endless excuses not to surrender in person, see Fakhri papers and *The Arab Bulletin* 109, 6 February 1919, p. 17.

¹¹⁵ Tibawi, A.L., "The last knight of the last caliphs", *Arabic and Islamic Themes. Historical, Educational and Literary Studies* (London: Luzac, 1976), pp. 154-8.

As to the fate of other protagonists: Emin, Fakhri's chief of staff, was blamed for having instigated the mutiny. Although the desire to surrender Medina was widespread among the garrison, Emin was ostracized by his comrades in the Egyptian prison camp since many felt that he had inflicted a heavy stain on the defense of Medina. After his return to Turkey, Emin was court-martialled and expelled from the army. Ali Necib who had signed the capitulation, but had nevertheless remained loyal to Fakhri, was later promoted to general.¹¹⁶

In August 1919 Fakhri was exiled to Malta like so many leading Ottoman politicians, officers and intellectuals who were accused by the Allies of having committed war crimes. In September 1921 Fakhri returned to Turkey and participated in the Turkish War of Independence. There was no longer any mention of the once impending charge of mutiny because he had refused to comply with orders from the government. From 1922 to 1926 he served as ambassador in Kabul. On October 22, 1948, Fakhri Paşa (Fahrettin Türkkan) died at the age of 80 and was buried at the Aşşıyan cemetery in Rumelihisarı. In 1984 Fakhri's sons, both retired generals, tried to revive the memory of their father by asking the then prime minister of Turkey, Turgut Özal, and the mayor of Istanbul, Bedrettin Dalan, who were travelling to Saudi Arabia, to support an initiative to name a street or a square in Medina after their father.¹¹⁷ I do not know if they were successful in their endeavour. But even so the command of the city of the Prophet by Fakhri Paşa in World War I constitutes a memorable chapter in the history of Medina.

¹¹⁶ Kıcıman, *Medine Müdâfaası*, pp. 479-80 with footnotes 24 and 25.

¹¹⁷ Fakhri papers.