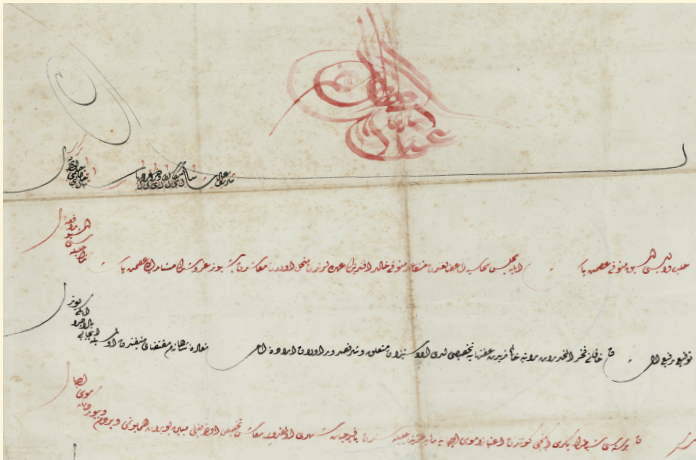


# Osmanische Welten: Quellen und Fallstudien

Festschrift für Michael Ursinus

Johannes Zimmermann, Christoph Herzog und  
Raoul Motika (Hg.)



University  
of Bamberg  
Press

## 8 Bamberger Orientstudien

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hg. von Lale Behzadi, Patrick Franke, Geoffrey Haig,  
Christoph Herzog, Birgitt Hoffmann, Lorenz Korn und  
Susanne Talabardon

Band 8

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# The Surrender of Medina (1918/19) Revisited

Martin Strohmeier

## *Introduction*

In the history of wars, the end of fighting by capitulation or surrender is a “highly complicated and dangerous act”<sup>1</sup>. It is complicated because of the opposing factors which enter into the equation. It is dangerous because of the very real risk of maltreatment or death at the hands of the enemy.

The factors which work in favour of surrender are the desire to avoid unnecessary violence and save lives in what is considered a hopeless situation. Low morale arising from inadequate supplies of food and ammunition, sickness, and a sense of extreme vulnerability can lead to great hazards: a breakdown in authority, discipline and cohesion resulting in desertions, panic, defeat or even massacre at the hands of

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1 Holger Afflerbach, *Die Kunst der Niederlage: Eine Geschichte der Kapitulation*, (Beck'sche Reihe; 6074), München: Beck, 2013, 14. Afflerbach examines the processes by which fighting stops in a historical perspective, demonstrating the “progress in regulating capitulation” since the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

the enemy. There are mechanisms which have evolved throughout history to prevent the hopeless continuation of battle. Afflerbach refers to these strategies as constituting “the invisible hand of war”<sup>2</sup>.

Conversely, there are concerns which counteract the impulse to surrender. The military code of honour calls for patriotism, courage, loyalty to comrades and self-sacrifice. Without such deeply instilled values, soldiers could not be expected to withstand the horrors of combat. Commanders and soldiers fear such consequences as being branded cowards or traitors, shame, social disgrace and loss of professional options. In cases where the highest military command has not authorised surrender there may be punishment, such as dishonourable dismissal or even court martial. The “dialectic between soldiers’ honour and survival instinct”<sup>3</sup> is a constant in all wars. Whatever the weight of these considerations, there is a turning point in battle at which continued fighting or a refusal to surrender must be considered, according to the well-known military theorist Carl von Clausewitz, “a desperate foolishness”<sup>4</sup>.

The protracted Ottoman defence and the ultimate surrender of Medina after a “siege”<sup>5</sup> of two and a half years in World War I constitutes one of the more peculiar episodes in the Near Eastern war theatre. Perhaps the oddest aspect was that there was hardly any fighting. Furthermore, the besieged troops far outnumbered the besiegers.<sup>6</sup> That the Ottoman forces could hold out for so long was due to the particular strength of Medina as a stronghold, its symbolic importance, the inactivity of the Sharifians and the leadership of the commanding general Faḫrī Paşa (Fahrettin Türkkân, 1868–1948).

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2 Afflerbach, *Kunst der Niederlage*, 105.

3 *Ibid.*, 8.

4 Clausewitz wrote: “No matter how highly the qualities of courage and steadfastness may be in war [...] there is a point beyond which persistence becomes desperate folly [in German: “eine verzweiflungsvolle Torheit”], and can therefore never be condoned” (Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, Michael Howard & Peter Paret (ed. & trans.), 8<sup>th</sup> ed., Princeton: 1984, 251f., quoted by Holger Afflerbach & Hew Strachan, “How Fighting ends: A History of Surrender”, in: id. (eds.), *How Fighting ends: A History of Surrender*. Oxford: University Press 2012, 1–4, 3.

5 I put the term *siege* in quotation marks, see the explanation below.

6 TNA, FO 882/7, Garland to Wilson, 29 December 1918, fol. 382.

Almost two and a half months after the signing of the Armistice of Mudros, surrender was finally effected despite the commander's refusal to yield. In the end, Faḥrī Paşa was not a party to surrender, a fact which engendered post-war heroic narratives that focused on the endurance of the defenders of Medina.

This article<sup>7</sup> deals with the following questions: What events and motives led to the surrender of Medina? Was there, as many officers under Faḥrī argued, no alternative? And how can we evaluate his role in holding on to Medina? What factors determined his refusal to surrender? Was the resistance he commanded heroic as it is deemed in Turkish popular history-writing or must it be seen, in the words of Clausewitz, to have been foolish? Was Faḥrī a religious fanatic or a patriot acting in the interests of his country? Was he insane or acting on sound principles?

## *Background*

In late May 1916—about a week before the opening shots of the Arab revolt in Medina were fired—the Hejaz Expeditionary Force under Faḥrī Paşa arrived in the city of the Prophet. Their mission was to prevent its seizure by the Sharifians. In this Faḥrī succeeded, whereas the Ottoman garrison in Mecca was defeated within a month. The intention of the Ottoman government to hold Medina (while the rest of the Hejaz fell to the Sharif of Mecca) had more to do with the city being one of the Holy Places than with its military significance. This was criticised not only by their German ally, but also in some Ottoman military circles.<sup>8</sup> It was argued that a relief of the troops in Palestine and Syria was more important than the rather symbolic possession of Medina. In fact, the

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7 A fuller account of the war years in Medina can be found in my article “Fakhri (Fahrettin) Paşa and the End of Ottoman Rule in Medina (1916–1919)”, in: *Turkish Historical Review* 4 (2013), 192–223.

8 Friedrich Freiherr Kress von Kressenstein, in charge of operations at the Suez Canal, approved the evacuation of Medina: AA (German Foreign Office), Politisches Archiv (PA), R 13880, 23 February 1917, K 197032f.

decision to evacuate Ottoman forces from the city was taken in 1917, but Faḥrī persuaded Cemāl and Enver that the loss of prestige which would follow from abandoning the city of the prophet's tomb would be devastating. Some British officers, among them Lawrence, saw an advantage in having Faḥrī's men tied up and leaving them increasingly isolated in Medina.<sup>9</sup>

Several factors contributed to the tenacity of Ottoman control over Medina. First of all, the war was not strikingly in evidence in terms of fighting. There were no intense battles, but rather skirmishes. Secondly, Medina was not under siege in the strict sense; the city was subjected to what could be termed a rather incomplete confinement or "comparatively distant investment"<sup>10</sup>. Medina was heavily fortified.<sup>11</sup> There were also defensive posts outside the city walls. The large number of soldiers, approx. 8.000 men, as well as the considerable amount of equipment, weapons and ammunition further safeguarded the city. Until March 1918, trains were running almost unhindered between Damascus and Medina, bringing fresh troops and supplies. Equally important was the food supply. Even after the armistice, some foodstuffs could be purchased from the Bedouins. Both within the city and on its outskirts wheat and other crops were planted; dates were especially abundant. The perhaps most decisive factor was the feared commander of the Hejaz Expeditionary Force, Lieutenant General Faḥrī Paşa (later general), who was able to impose a high level of discipline, aided by an extensive network of informers. Moreover, he regarded the Sharifians as mere rebels to whom under no circumstances the city of the Prophet should be surrendered.

However, the length of the blockade was also due to the indecisiveness and lack of aggressiveness of the Sharifians vis-à-vis the Medina stronghold. They knew that an assault required a large force, an

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9 T. E. Lawrence (Lawrence of Arabia), *Seven Pillars of Wisdom: A Triumph*, (Penguin Modern Classics; 1966), London: Harmondsworth, 1965, 232.

10 TNA, FO 141/438, 14 January 1918, No. 7755/5.

11 The walls were erected at various times from the tenth to the nineteenth centuries. During the most recent fortifications in the 1860s, the walls had been raised to a height of 25 m; cf. Andrew Peterson, *Dictionary of Islamic Architecture*, London: Routledge, 1996, 182.

experienced commander and adequate weaponry, including long-range heavy artillery, none of which was available to them. The sacredness of the city and the danger that shelling could damage religious buildings, particularly Muhammad's burial mosque, was an important motive in not taking more decisive action, or at least served, as some historians and contemporaries would have it, as a pretext for inaction.<sup>12</sup>

In his papers, Faḥrī mentions a surrender demand by Sharif 'Alī in April 1917 which is not recorded in other sources. According to Faḥrī, 'Alī proposed that the Hejaz force confined in Medina should "unconditionally surrender". To this Faḥrī responded that he ('Alī) should lay down weapons, "repent of and renounce his sins regarding his criminal acts and, learning a lesson from the Wahhabites, renew his faith".<sup>13</sup>

In August 1918, Ḥusayn bowed to increased British pressure and sent a harsh, even contemptuous letter to Faḥrī, demanding surrender.<sup>14</sup> Faḥrī responded in kind, addressing Ḥusayn as "To Him who broke the power of Islam".<sup>15</sup> In late September, Wingate, the High Commissioner of Egypt, urged capitulation.<sup>16</sup> 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".<sup>17</sup>

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12 Elie Kedourie, "The Surrender of Medina, January 1919", in: *Middle Eastern Studies* 13 (1977), 124–43.

13 *Beyānnāme* 12 Nisān 1917 (*Faḥrī Papers* [papers dealing with the situation in Medina from 1916–1919, partly in Turkish with Arabic letters, partly in modern Turkish; the documents are neither numbered, nor are they in any specific order]).

14 TNA, FO 371/3393, 29 August 1918, fols. 440–1.

15 TNA, FO 371/3393, 4 September 1918, fol. 473.

16 TNA, FO 882/7, Wingate to Fakhri ed Din Pasha, 26 September 1918, fols. 331–2.

17 *Faḥrī Papers*. Naci Kâşif Kıcıman, *Medine Müdafası: Hicaz Bizden Nasıl Ayrıldı? 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.*, Istanbul: Sebil Yayinevi, 1976, 398. Kedourie, "Surrender", 132.

## *Armistice*

One month later, on October 30, the armistice agreement was signed in Mudros, stipulating complete and unconditional surrender, the immediate opening of the Straits and demobilisation of the Ottoman armies. According to clause 16 of the armistice agreement, the Ottoman forces in the Hejaz, Asir and Yemen were to yield to the closest Allied commander.

Meanwhile, the three members of the Young Turk triumvirate had fled and the new government was willing to cooperate with the Allies. On November 6, the stipulations were sent to Faḥrī in a directive from the Grand Vizier and Minister of War, Aḥmed ‘İzzet Paşa.<sup>18</sup> This directive came via British cable and in a fragmentary way. Therefore, Faḥrī suspected the British of manipulation and demanded written orders from Istanbul. The refusals to surrender prior to and directly after the armistice were reasonable. When, however, Faḥrī questioned the authenticity of the encoded order and still refused to yield, it became clear that the Paşa was trying to buy time.<sup>19</sup> At the very least, he thought it his duty to hold out in order to enhance the Ottoman position at the coming peace negotiations. Moreover, it can be assumed that Faḥrī was mistrustful of the new government, possibly not ready to accept their authority. At the same time, he was worried about the safety of his troops vis-à-vis the undisciplined Bedouin forces—a concern also shared by those who negotiated the armistice.

However, his justifications for holding onto Medina throughout November and December 1918 became increasingly difficult for his soldiers to accept. In March 1918 the last troops and supplies had arrived. There are reports in British sources that as early as January 1918 “most of the garrison” were eager to surrender because of low rations.<sup>20</sup> By June 1918, soldiers received 200 g of bread, 30 g of meat and dates

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18 *Faḥrī Papers*; TNA, FO 882/7, fol. 369, in English translation.

19 *Faḥrī Papers*; *The Arab Bulletin* 108 (11 January 1919), 6; *The Arab Bulletin* 110 (30 April 1919), 43.

20 *The Arab Bulletin* 76 (13 January 1918), 14.

daily.<sup>21</sup> Soon, further rations were introduced. In autumn 1918, there were signs of starvation in the garrison because of poor nutrition, malaria and dysentery becoming widespread. Faḥrī may not have recognised the signs of attrition: widespread dissatisfaction and despair among his soldiers, and the point at which even the majority of officers loyal to their commander could no longer accept his refusal to follow government orders. Faḥrī had overestimated his soldiers' willingness to endure further privations.

In early December, Wingate—frustrated by the delaying tactics—presented an ultimatum to Faḥrī. If he did not surrender by December 15, the British would no longer restrain the Arab forces. There are hints in the British sources that they intended to bring about the fall of Medina by means of “psychological warfare”. Already in September 1918, they proposed to the Sharifians that they encourage desertions among the Ottoman forces by offering cash rewards for good treatment of Ottoman soldiers arrested alive. The British urged Ḥusayn to disseminate copies of the surrender demand widely in the garrison. In this way, they hoped to sow discord and create an atmosphere of hopelessness which would result in “numerous deserters”.<sup>22</sup> As it happened, this was precisely the result of the surrender demands sent to the city, an effect heightened by Captain Žiyā's stay in Medina.

### *Captain Žiyā's mission*

On December 18, the Ottoman government's envoy and ADC to the General Chief of Staff, Cevād Şākir Paşa, captain Žiyā Bey, arrived in Medina. There are widely conflicting and paradoxical accounts of the aims of his mission, his actual communication with Faḥrī and the effects of his mixing with Ottoman officers. Žiyā's own statements are contradictory. Ultimately, there is no conclusive proof that he convinced

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21 Kıcıman, *Medine Müdafaası*, 213.

22 TNA, FO 141/438 Wilson to Garland, Dec. 7, 1918; TNA, FO 141/438, 24 December 1918; TNA, FO 882/7, 15 Aug 1918, fol. 177.

Faḫrî to hold out or, on the contrary, that he emboldened officers to revolt against their commander. Officially, he was acting as a postman who delivered the eviction order of the Minister of War and a statement that Faḫrî would be regarded as a mutineer, if he continued to disobey orders.<sup>23</sup>

Žiyā had been an adjutant to Faḫrî and probably held him in awe. Both had been stalwart CUP comrades in arms. It is likely, therefore, that he secretly informed Faḫrî about the emerging resistance movement to Allied Control and the Istanbul government, supported by many officers in the Ottoman army, and that he urged Faḫrî to continue to defy orders for surrender. Certainly, the British suspected that Žiyā had been sent with secret instructions to persist.

On the other hand, the contrary is also possible, in that he encouraged the disaffected officers to resist Faḫrî. Žiyā insinuated to the British that he had influenced some of Faḫrî's staff by suggesting that a continuation of the situation was pointless. Furthermore, despite the restrictions on his movements, Žiyā had been "able to open the eyes of some of the staff to the true state of affairs in Europe, of which they had, for the most part been kept in ignorance".<sup>24</sup> It cannot be ruled out that he had officially been charged with the task of undermining Faḫrî's position vis-à-vis his soldiers, although that would have been a double-edged sword; such an attempt could easily get out of hand and lead to discord, as, indeed, happened.

On the other hand, Žiyā later clearly distanced himself from the mutineers because "the dishonour of Emīn and his friends [...] will be a serious stain on the army and on military honour".<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, there is some conjecture that Žiyā helped Emīn, the foremost of the officials opposed to Faḫrî, to send a telegram to the General Staff explaining his actions.<sup>26</sup>

The ambiguity of Žiyā's role is a recurrent theme running through British sources. The British later felt that Žiyā had misled them

23 TNA, FO 882/7, Garland to Wilson, 26 December 1918.

24 TNA, FO 141/438, Cheetham to FO, 24 January 1919, fols. 10–7.

25 TNA, FO 882/7, letter of Žiyā to Faḫrî, 5 January 1919.

26 Feridun Kandemir, *Peygamberimizin Gölgesinde Son Türkler (Medine Müdafaası)*, Istanbul: Yağmur Yayınevi, 1974, 188.



by portraying the physical condition of the troops as better than it actually was and by stating that rebellion against Faḥrī was impossible due to his firm grip.<sup>27</sup>

### *Surrender debates and opposition to Faḥrī*

In any case, events came to a head immediately following Żiyā's departure (December 24). Faḥrī called a meeting with Emīn, his chief of staff, and Colonel 'Alī Necīb,<sup>28</sup> explaining that he had sent Żiyā with instructions to ask for a decree of the Sultan (*irāde*). He expressed the view that Medina came under the jurisdiction of the sultan/caliph. Since he, Faḥrī, was the custodian of the Prophet's tomb, he did not want to run the risk of being cursed by the Muslim world for handing 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 Hejaz and not the independent *sancaḳ* of Medina. Thus, the city was not part of the agreement. Moreover, the Paşa warned against acting precipitately. Until the arrival of the *irāde*, Medina could be used as a security at the peace negotiations. 'Alī Necīb, who initially had tended towards surrender, accepted Faḥrī's arguments, but Emīn insisted that the city should be evacuated.<sup>29</sup>

Faḥrī and his chief of staff broke with each other. Together with like-minded officers, Emīn 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 demobilised and an Arab government had been set up in Damascus. Thirdly, the *irāde* that Faḥrī had

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27 *The Arab Bulletin* 108 (11 January 1919), 7; *The Arab Bulletin* 109 (6 February 1919), 17–20.

28 Commander of the 58<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division and second in command of the Ottoman troops in Medina.

29 *Faḥrī Papers*; TNA, FO 882/7, 29 December 1918.

demanded was unnecessary since the government was responsible for such a decision. Even if the Paşa obtained such an *irāde*, he would not surrender. Fourthly, one could not permit that thousands of Muslims be condemned to a senseless death, something which was forbidden by the Qur’ān. If they were to die, then at home and not as rebels against the government.<sup>30</sup>

The manifesto seems also to have been inspired by the firm belief that in the future, Turks and Arabs would live in separate political entities.<sup>31</sup> Faḥrī claimed later that the desertions were masterminded by two Arab officers, the aforementioned Emīn and lieutenant colonel Şabrī, a Baghdadi and quartermaster of the garrison.<sup>32</sup>

### *Desertions and Faḥrī’s declarations*

Three days after the manifesto, Emīn deserted with his battalion (December 31). In a dispatch to the General Staff in Istanbul, he justified his desertion (he did not use the word) by wishing “to embolden public opinion and to save 14.000 people” and “to force the commander to carry out the orders of the Government instantly”.<sup>33</sup>

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30 *Faḥrī Papers*; Kıcıman, *Medine Müdafaası*, 409–15; Kandemir, *Son Türkler*, 188–96; *The Arab Bulletin* 110 (30 April 30 1919), 46f.

31 “Arabs and Turks will live as two independent peoples under their own separate governments.” Kandemir, *Son Türkler*, 193; Kıcıman, *Medine Müdafaası*, 426. Obviously based on a slightly different text, the translation in *The Arab Bulletin* 110 (30 April 1919), 46, runs as follows: “[...] for the Arabs would have become independent of us [the Turks, MS] eventually in any case. As it is, they will not remain our enemies, brothers as they are in religion and history [...]”. As proof of this, the manifesto praised the Sharif for having sent medication for the sick as a sign of humanity and fraternity.

32 Şabrī was one of the members of the negotiating committee. TNA, FO 882/20, “Interview with General Fakhri Eddin Pasha by Captain Garland”, Cairo, 6 April 1919, fol. 182. Faḥrī in his papers states the following: “After that [the mission of Ziyā, December 24, MS] rumours started to circulate among the officers in Medina and signs of dissatisfaction were observed. The chief of staff, Emīn, 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 [...]”.

33 Kandemir, *Son Türkler*, 188; Kıcıman, *Medine Müdafaası*, 433f.; *Faḥrī Papers*; *The Arab Bulletin* 108 (11 January 1919), 7.

Initially, the mutineers considered removing Faḥrī from his post. However, the general got wind of the plan and sent for Emīn. The latter feared that he would be arrested and deserted.

The desertion of Emīn and his battalion was apparently not negotiated with the Sharifians. After the war, the British told Faḥrī, to his surprise, that they had not had a hand in the desertion of Emīn, but in fact had worked towards desertions in general as part of psychological warfare.<sup>34</sup> However, further surrenders by other units seem to have been coordinated with the Arab headquarter, in order to reduce the danger of confrontations with Bedouin fighters.<sup>35</sup> Surrender and captivity seemed to the Ottoman soldiers better than remaining with their own units. The desertions signalled an irrevocable breakdown in military authority at the garrison, ironically so, as Faḥrī's reputation was based to a large extent on his rigid discipline and authoritarian style of leadership.

Faḥrī was furious. He reacted with three proclamations, condemning the desertions and attempting to refute the accusations raised in the manifesto. He called Emīn "stupid" for not comprehending that the Government in a capital occupied by the enemy did not adequately express the national will. The Sultanate and Caliphate were the only remaining institutions to do that. He tried to induce the troops still in Medina to hold out, reminding them of the disgrace experienced by such commanders as Taḥsīn Paşa who was responsible for the surrender of Salonica to the Greeks.<sup>36</sup>

The manifesto of the Central Committee under the leadership of Emīn constituted the turning point in the defence of Medina. The demands for capitulation and the orders of the Minister of War, Faḥrī's delaying tactics and refusal, the news about the situation at home, exhaustion and despair resulted in the mutiny and desertions of several

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34 TNA, FO 882/20, "Interview with General Fakhri Eddin Pasha by Captain Garland", Cairo, 6 April 1919, fol. 182.

35 *The Arab Bulletin* 109 (6 February 1919), 17.

36 Faḥrī wrote: „Fear the curse of the Caliph, the nation and the Muslim world, but not to be a rebel against ‘Abdullāh Paşa [Ottoman Minister of War, M.S.]! [...] Go, degrade yourself to those barelegged rebels! Good luck on the road which will carry you into hell!“, Kıcıman, *Medine Müdafası*, 425f.

army units within one week. But there were still officers and men who stood by the Paşa.

### *Discord and divisions*

The polemical exchanges of declarations and the desertions laid bare the discord and divisions in the Medina garrison. The war of words, in which the opponents used insulting words against each other, created a tense atmosphere and confusion.<sup>37</sup> The desertion of Emīn and his battalion constituted the “beginning of an enormous opposition. On the one hand, there was the Paşa and a small minority; on the other hand, Emīn Bey and a large majority”.<sup>38</sup> If we are to believe the statements in Faḥrī’s papers, the troops were in anarchy and dissolution.<sup>39</sup> Soldiers left their posts and duties and talked openly to each other about deserting; goods were sold, partly stolen from the military storehouse, and mounts (mules, donkeys, camels) were sought after for escaping. Some soldiers tried to persuade their comrades who were reluctant to flee.<sup>40</sup> Communications with troops north of Medina no longer functioned.

In an attempt, probably aimed at winning back the sympathy and loyalty of his soldiers as well as reducing the numbers he needed to feed, Faḥrī ordered the discharge of soldiers who were older than 25 years which was characterised as “desperate” and “helpless”.<sup>41</sup> But, given the investment, where should they go and how?

Finally, on January 3, Necīb Bey and other high-ranking officers went to see Faḥrī and explain to him the gravity of the situation and that there was no alternative to surrender. After initial objections, he gave his permission for a committee of four officers to enter into negotiations

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37 “When the third declaration [of Faḥrī and his followers] got around from hand to hand, the city was in a revolution“, *Faḥrī Papers*, a four page description of the situation in Medina on January 4, written by one or several persons.

38 *Faḥrī Papers*: a three-page memo entitled “Medine Müdafaasının Son Günleri”.

39 “There was no longer an Expeditionary Force, no longer a commander“, *ibid.*

40 *Faḥrī Papers*, cf. footnote 37.

41 *Ibid.*; Kıcman, *Medine Müdafaası*, 431.

with the Sharifians.<sup>42</sup> Despite repeated attempts to induce Faḥrī to accept the Sharifian demand for personal surrender, he stubbornly refused and was finally arrested by his own men, perhaps with his tacit approval.<sup>43</sup>

### *Surrender agreement*

The surrender conditions are for the most part technical in nature. They stipulate that the Ottoman troops assemble at certain places, appoint committees for the administration of Medina after the evacuation, guarantee personal property of the soldiers and handle certain administrative affairs.<sup>44</sup> The most important clause was no. 2 which specified that Faḥrī would have to leave Medina 48 hours after the signing of the agreement and go to the headquarter of Emīr ‘Alī in Bī’r

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- 42 He appointed ‘Alī Necib as his representative, citing health reasons: *ibid.*, 437. This was most certainly a subterfuge for not having to show up at the negotiations. On the other hand, there is no doubt that Faḥrī was suffering from arthritis and Spanish influenza. A British officer, who interviewed Faḥrī after surrender, found that “[...] illness, melancholia and religious fanaticism brought him to a state verging on insanity”, *The Arab Bulletin* 110 (30 April 1919), 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”, *Faḥrī Papers*.
- 43 The *irāde* that Faḥrī had demanded from the Sultan no longer played a role. There are two versions: Kıcıman (*Medine Müdafaası*, 475) relates that the Minister of Justice, ‘Alī Ḥaydar Efendi (Arsebük), who had been dispatched from Istanbul, arrived four days after the surrender in Medina with the *irāde* so that it was without consequence. This version is confirmed by a memo stating that the order of the Sultan for the surrender of Medina was delivered by ‘Alī Ḥaydar to Faḥrī in Bī’r Darwīš on January 13: TNA, FO 882/20, Bassett to Wilson, 15 January 1919. However, Kandemir (*Son Türkler*, 203) writes that ‘Alī Ḥaydar handed the *irāde* over to Faḥrī in Medina, but that the general did not accept it, because the Sultan had bowed to enemy pressure; this latter version cannot be correct as Kandemir puts this after the proclamations of Faḥrī which were published several days earlier.
- 44 Only the preamble and the first two paragraphs can claim the significance apparently attached to them by the Arab Bureau: “The terms under which the surrender of Medina was carried out form a document not only of historic interest, but also one that is likely to be needed for reference in the future [...]”, *The Arab Bulletin* 112 (24 June 1919), 88–90. Unfortunately, there is no explanation how the surrender could have had significance for the future.

Darwīš. Four Ottoman officers put their signatures under the document.<sup>45</sup> There are several discrepancies between the document as related in the FO files and the version in the *Arab Bulletin*, the latter published more than five months after the signing took place. The FO file's headline runs: "Translation of the Medina surrender agreement drawn up between Captain Garland and the Arabs with Necib Bey independently of Faḥrī". Then follows in the preamble a contradictory formulation: "[...] and the parties [alluding to the Ottoman officers] who have fixed their signatures to this on the other, acting on behalf of the General in Command in Medina [...]". The contrast between "independently" and "acting on behalf [...]" is striking. Another difference is "General in Command" [i.e. Faḥrī, MS] in the FO file and "the General Command" in the *Arab Bulletin*.<sup>46</sup>

## *Conclusion*

It is common for military leaders to delay admitting defeat for as long as possible, and once they do surrender, to frame it as forced surrender. If there is no alternative to surrender, then there is no loss of honour. Some commanders would probably have capitulated in Faḥrī's situation to prevent continued, senseless loss of life. Faḥrī, however, did not have that perspective. He could not countenance the stigma of being the commander who had abandoned Medina to the rebel Sharifians and uncouth Bedouins. He behaved as he felt military and patriotic honour demanded; moreover, he had gone on record with his proclamations denying that the situation was as hopeless as the deserters claimed. When 'Alī Necīb and his other loyal officers finally convinced him that

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45 Colonel 'Alī Necīb, colonel 'Abdurrahmān, captain Kemāl (assistant head physician) and lieutenant colonel Şabrī; for the British the document was signed by captain Garland and for the Hashemite Government by Emīr 'Alī: TNA, FO 882/20, fol. 167–9. *The Arab Bulletin* 112 (24 June 1919), 90; Kıcıman, *Medine Müdafaası*, 444; the document is dated 7 January 1919.

46 The Turkish version given by Kıcıman, *Medine Müdafaası*, 437–44 does not have these lines.

there was no other choice, Faḥrī's way out of the quagmire was to extricate himself from his leadership duties. He allowed 'Alī Necīb and other officers to negotiate surrender to the Sharifians. When they returned with the demand for personal surrender, Faḥrī refused and was taken to the Sharifians' camp as a prisoner, which was doubtless what he desired.<sup>47</sup>

Faḥrī was fortunate in that his strategy paid off, at least as regards his own reputation. Not long after arriving in the POW camps in Egypt, the former Medina defenders, while not denying the hopelessness of the situation, insisted that the garrison should not have surrendered with internal discord and desertions which had placed a "dirty stain"<sup>48</sup> on the defence of Medina. They put the blame solely on Emīn and his followers and lauded Faḥrī's behaviour. While many of them had joined the desertions, they were probably becoming fearful of being accused of dishonourable behaviour once they were in their homeland again. Far from being recognised for his service in ending an intolerable situation, Emīn became a scapegoat. Emīn's claim, upon re-entering Medina, that he had saved thousands of lives, provoked resentment and affected the severity of the accusation.<sup>49</sup> After his return to Turkey, Emīn was court-martialled and expelled from the army. 'Alī Necīb who had signed the capitulation, but had nevertheless remained loyal to Faḥrī, was later promoted to general.<sup>50</sup> Faḥrī, however, retained the nimbus of invincibility and heroism.

The exaltation of Faḥrī and his garrison is not restricted to Turkish popular history-writing and to the reports of soldiers about their experiences in Medina. Professional historians, too, regard Faḥrī in a

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47 About the meeting between Emīr 'Abdullāh and Faḥrī cf. 'Abdallāh I., *Memoirs of King Abdullah of Transjordan*, Philip Graves (ed.), 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., London: J. Cape, 1950, 174–80.

48 Kıcıman, *Medine Müdafaası*, 418.

49 *Ibid.*, 475.

50 *Ibid.*, 479f. with footnotes 24 and 25. The judgement of British officers about 'Alī Necīb varies considerably. During the surrender negotiations with the committee of Ottoman officers "Ali Negib Bey showed himself weak, dilatory and procrastinating, and it seemed as if he would never be induced to take a strong line of action", *The Arab Bulletin* 109 (6 February 1919), 18. On the other hand, Captain Goldie, working with 'Alī Necīb on the transport of the troops from Medina to the coast, praised him as "the best class of Turkish officer I have met in the Hejaz": FO 882/7, 7 March 1919.

positive light.<sup>51</sup> It is difficult to agree with Trumpener's recent assessment of Faḥrī's "inspired leadership".<sup>52</sup> What was inspired and where was the leadership?

Faḥrī may be credited with an orderly administration of Medina for most of the "siege". But when it came to the critical weeks after receiving his government's orders, he allowed or even forced others to take the initiative out of his hands, leading them, as it were, to insubordination. It seems to me that Faḥrī's motivation in those final, tense weeks was increasingly self-serving or, in Clausewitz' words, "a desperate foolishness".

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51 Kedourie, "Surrender", 133; Abdul Latif Tibawi, "The last Knight of the Last Caliphs", in: id., *Arabic and Islamic Themes: Historical, Educational and Literary Studies*, London: Luzac, 1976, 154–8.

52 Ulrich Trumpener, "The Turkish War, 1914–1918", in: John Horne (ed.), *A Companion to World War I*, Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012, 97–111, 103.



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