

## Did the UK plan to give Palestine to Syria: Britain's treachery, France's revenge?

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By Meir Zamir

In the summer of 1944, when soldiers of Free France were still fighting alongside the British against the Nazis in Europe, the two colonial powers were engaged in a clandestine struggle in the Middle East. That summer, French intelligence scored a major coup over its British counterpart in the region. The French recruited a Syrian agent who had access to top-secret correspondence between Syrian leaders - among them President Shukri al-Quwatli and Foreign Minister Jamil Mardam (who later became prime minister) - and leaders of neighboring states. French intelligence also obtained reports sent by Syrian diplomats in London, Washington, Moscow, Paris and a number of Arab countries.

The identity of the Syrian agent is unknown, but cables transmitted between Beirut and Paris suggest that his recruitment involved large payments. The information he obtained was sent every week or two, in packages of 40 or 50 documents, from Damascus to French intelligence headquarters in Beirut, where they were translated from Arabic into French. An intelligence officer or a translator sometimes added notes. The French attached great importance to the speedy transfer of the translated documents, so much so that they allotted a special plane for this purpose. Extreme precautionary measures were taken to preserve the secrecy of the operation, and only a few officials were permitted to see the documents. There was also a ban on their transfer to the French Foreign Ministry. One copy was sent directly to the office of General Charles de Gaulle, who sometimes added his comments and issued appropriate instructions.

After the war the French sought to regain control of Syria and Lebanon, but Syria constituted a distinctive problem, in that its independence had been declared already in 1941, after joint forces of Britain and Free France liberated the country from the rule of the Vichy regime. From then until 1945, de Gaulle tried to force a treaty on Syria that would ensure France privileged status. After he understood that a Syrian-French agreement was not possible due to Syrian and British opposition, de Gaulle decided in April 1945 to send military reinforcements to Syria and Lebanon. This move, coupled with the harsh response of the French on May 8 in the city of Setif, Algeria, where French forces massacred thousands of Algerians who were demonstrating for their country's independence, badly rattled the Syrian president. Quwatli feared that he would suffer the same fate as Emir Faisal, who was expelled from Damascus by the French in July 1920.

At the end of May 1945, French forces attacked governmental institutions in Syria. On May 30, General Bernard Paget, the commander in chief of the British forces in the Middle East, issued an ultimatum to the French to hold their fire immediately and return to their barracks, or face a confrontation with far superior British forces. De Gaulle and the provisional French government had no choice but to comply. In the weeks that followed, with the tacit consent of the British, Syrian nationalists massacred scores of French citizens, and looted and destroyed the offices of French companies and French cultural, educational and religious institutions. Thus did French rule in Syria reach its violent and abrupt end.

In one of the most dramatic moments of the Syrian crisis, General de Gaulle told Duff Cooper, the British ambassador to Paris: "We are not, I admit, in a position to open hostilities against you at the present time. But you have insulted France and betrayed the West. This cannot be forgotten." On that same day, June 4, 1945, Cooper wrote in his diary: "He is genuinely convinced that the whole incident has been arranged by the British so as to carry out their long-planned policy of driving the French out of the Levant in order to take their place."

It now emerges that de Gaulle had concrete proof that "perfidious Albion" had struck again. That proof is contained in Syrian documents from 1944-1945, and some from 1947, which are preserved in the French archives and have now been made available to researchers. British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden and the rest of the British diplomatic corps persisted in their denials. Britain, they asserted, had no surreptitious motives in Syria and Lebanon, and in fact had mediated between Syria and France in an effort to reach an agreement. Britain's decision to intervene was the direct result of de Gaulle's aggressive policy, and his suspicions concerning Britain's role in the Levant bordered on paranoia and Anglophobia.

De Gaulle, for his part, was as good as his word: He never forgot and never forgave the British for one of the most galling and humiliating episodes he endured in his long career. In his memoirs he repeats obsessively his accusations against the British, for having betrayed France and exploited its passing weakness in order to dislodge it from a region in which it had religious, cultural and economic ties for hundreds of years. Britain, de Gaulle maintained, had generated the Syrian crisis deliberately in order to remove France from the Middle East, because France constituted an obstacle in its path

toward creating an Arab federation under British hegemony. De Gaulle also accused Churchill of attempting to take advantage of the Syrian affair in order to oust him as head of the provisional French government.

Arab historians have described the crisis of May-June 1945 as a heroic uprising by the Syrian nationalists, who expelled the French from their country and thereby ensured its full independence. To this day, the Syrians mark the French departure in the form of a national holiday. But a perusal of hundreds of Syrian documents now available in French archives will oblige scholars to reexamine the history of the region, taking into consideration the secret alliance between Britain and Syria, which allowed Britain to exercise considerable control in Syria until 1948. Such a study may well have far-reaching implications for the history of the struggle to establish the State of Israel.

### Vanquishing Syria

De Gaulle's feeling of betrayal was heightened by the fact that the officer who represented Britain in Syria and Lebanon during the war years was General Edward Spears, who had extricated de Gaulle from France at the last minute before the Nazi conquest. On August 5, 1944, Spears sent Riyad al-Sulh, the Lebanese prime minister, on a secret mission to Damascus. So strict was British security that Sulh learned the exact purpose of his mission only when he met with the British consul in the Syrian capital. The consul dictated to Sulh a proposal from His Majesty's Government to the Syrian government; Sulh was to convey the proposal to Saadallah al-Jabiri, the Syrian prime minister, who was also Sulh's father-in-law.

The British proposal included, among other points, Syria's unification with Transjordan and Palestine to create "Greater Syria." Syria would also have to accord Britain preferential status in military, economic and cultural matters and not sign any agreement with other countries without prior consultation with London. To persuade the Syrian leaders to agree to these terms, Britain was ready to commit itself to defend Syrian independence in the face of external aggression, continue the White Paper policy in Palestine and put a complete halt to "Jewish ambitions."

This clandestine British proposal to the Syrian government shows that, contrary to what has been believed until now, in August 1944 the British government gave its representatives in the Middle East the go-ahead to implement Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Said's "Fertile Crescent Plan." This entailed forming Greater Syria by integrating Syria with Transjordan, Palestine and Lebanon. At a later stage, Greater Syria would be united in a federation with Iraq. The Christian minorities in Lebanon and the Jews in Palestine would enjoy autonomy.

The document elaborating the British proposal shows that after three years of objecting, Churchill and Eden finally accepted the approach of their representatives in the Middle East and adopted a strategy congruent with the surging force of pan-Arabism. The obstacles were formidable: Britain had to oust France from the Levant, violate its commitments to the Zionist movement just when the scale of the Holocaust in Europe was becoming apparent, and depose Jordan's Emir Abdullah. In addition, Britain could be certain that its moves would anger the United States and the Soviet Union alike. Nevertheless, Churchill and Eden, and afterward Clement Attlee and Ernest Bevin, allowed a group of overconfident diplomats and army officers to drag them into a costly adventure, which was to put an end to British hegemony in the Middle East six years later.

Between August 1944 and May 1945, the major obstacle to the implementation of Britain's plans was the obdurate opposition of president Quwatli, who in the preparatory meetings for the establishment of the Arab League, supported the Egyptian-Saudi camp against Iraq. The British and Syrian documents present a clear picture of the pressure the British and the Iraqis applied on Quwatli. They led de Gaulle, who closely followed the British and Iraqi intriguing, to remark that the Syrian president was "the sole sincere politician in those countries." To Georges Bidault, his foreign minister, he noted the "duplicitous" of the British government, which in London was still promising to persuade Syria and Lebanon to conclude treaties with France, while in Damascus its representatives were secretly trying to get the Syrian government to sign a treaty with Britain.

The final stage in this British campaign of intrigue, provocation and pressure was played out in May 1945, with the aim of coercing Quwatli to sign an agreement with Britain. The secret British efforts to expel France from Syria were coordinated by Colonel Walter Stirling (who sometimes operated in the guise of a correspondent for The London Times). In a report dated May 22, Stirling described a scene which could have come straight out of a Shakespearean tragedy: Even as Mardam was plotting to replace him, Quwatli was lying sick in bed, clutching a piece of paper on which the American consul general, George Wadsworth, had written - in the name of his government - an undertaking to back Syria's struggle to free itself from colonial rule. Quwatli declared to Stirling that the United States was the Arabs' best friend, whereas the British were egoistic and could not be relied upon for very long as they changed their position according to their interests.

On May 29, at the height of the French assault on his government's institutions, Quwatli finally gave in to the British and agreed to subject his country to British hegemony, in return for Britain's defense of Syria against the French. The following day General Paget issued the ultimatum to the French forces to observe an immediate cease-fire. The documents in the French archives show that the secret agreement was concluded hastily and consisted of seven letters: five from President Quwatli to Terence Shone, the British minister in Syria and Lebanon (to which Mardam was a cosignatory) and two from Shone to the Syrian president. Additional correspondence relating to the agreement was

exchanged between Quwatli, Mardam and Shone between June 2 and July 2.

All five letters Quwatli sent open with the same sentence, in which the Syrian president swears on his honor, in his name and on behalf of the Syrian nation to establish Greater Syria; to grant Britain concessions for oil exploration in Syria and a preferential political, economic and financial status in the country; to adopt a foreign policy compatible with Britain's; and to allow Britain a role in establishing the Syrian army. Apparently Quwatli's immediate concern was that his commitment to the British remain absolutely secret, and Shone's two letters to him undertook, on behalf of his government, not to divulge the existence of his letters.

In the years that followed, Quwatli and Mardam enjoyed the admiration of the Syrian public in particular and of the Arab world as a whole for having led Syria to full independence without any foreign presence. But the Syrian documents reveal the extent of British control in Syria and the various methods the British employed to ensure that Quwatli would toe the line. The British continued to exploit Damascus' fear of the return of the French and further heightened it by emphasizing the Zionist and Soviet threats, as well as the ambitions of Emir Abdullah to crown himself king of Greater Syria.

At the end of 1945, the new Labour government took advantage of Syria's fears of a possible change in British policy to ensure that Damascus would uphold its May 1945 undertakings to Britain. In pro-British Iraq, Nuri al-Said took steps to coordinate Syria's foreign policy with that of Iraq in regional and inter-Arab relations. British officers were employed in the Syrian army, although officially it was claimed that they had been hired privately by the Syrian government. British intelligence also used Syrian agents for subversion against France in North Africa. However, the major obstacle to the Anglo-Iraqi-Syrian plan was not France, but the thrust of the Zionist movement to establish a Jewish state in Palestine.

In the service of Britain

In June 1945, in a debate in the French Consultative Assembly on the Syrian crisis, Bidault warned the British: "Hodei mihi, cras tibi" (in Latin: It is my lot today, yours tomorrow). Indeed, in the following years French intelligence did its utmost to exact a high price from Britain in the Middle East. The French were not motivated purely by revenge, but also by the ambition to restore their influence in the Levant, particularly in Lebanon, and counter British subversion in North Africa. The Syrian Foreign Ministry's documents, which the French received from their agent in Damascus, afforded them ample opportunity to act against the British in the Middle East, as well as against the governments of Quwatli-Mardam in Syria and of Sulh in Lebanon. In the period 1945-1948, the most effective French weapon against Britain in the Middle East was its support for the struggle of the Zionist movement. In a meeting held on October 6, 1945, with Marc Jarblum, head of the Zionist organization in France, de Gaulle stated that "the Jews in Palestine are the only ones who can chase the British out of the Middle East." On November 10, in a visit to Paris, David Ben-Gurion, head of the Jewish Agency, was told by foreign minister Bidault that France supported the Zionist cause.

Syrian documents recently uncovered shed new light on events that led to the establishment of the State of Israel and call for a reexamination of certain basic beliefs concerning British policy in Palestine from 1945-1948. The British proposal to Syrian leaders in August 1944 and the secret Anglo-Syrian agreement of May 29, 1945, reveal that Britain had assured Syria - a country not previously known to have been under British hegemony - that it would limit Jewish immigration and thwart the emergence of an independent Jewish state in Palestine. The agreement also reveals that by the summer of 1945, Britain had already formulated a Middle East policy based on an Iraqi-Syrian alliance, which included a plan for the formation of Greater Syria, which was to include Palestine. That policy patently could not accommodate the creation of an independent Jewish state in any part of Palestine.

Hundreds of Syrian diplomatic documents covering the period June-December 1945 provide details of negotiations between Syria and other Arab states and Britain's new Labour government on the Palestine question. It becomes apparent how the future of Palestine played a key role in inter-Arab rivalry and how the British government invoked the Zionist threat to ensure that the Syrian leaders abided by their secret undertaking to Britain.

Neither American warnings, Soviet threats, pressure by the kings of Egypt and Saudi Arabia, nor criticism by Syrian representatives in Washington and Paris were able to detach Quwatli and Mardam from their commitments to support British policy. Whenever Quwatli, under Saudi and Egyptian pressure, sought to free himself from the grip of the British, they played the French and Zionist cards, while the Iraqi government drew on pro-Iraqi Syrian politicians, particularly in the Aleppo region, to withstand the pressure. And always hovering in the background was the dreaded Emir Abdullah and his ambitions for the Syrian crown. Each time it seemed that Quwatli was no longer heeding "British advice," British agents in Syria or Transjordan, including Colonel Stirling, gave large sums of money to tribal sheikhs in the Syrian desert in return for their declared allegiance to Emir Abdullah.

The British exploited the Zionist aspirations for a Jewish state in Palestine not only to threaten the Syrians, but also to induce them to cooperate. Indeed, following the secret Anglo-Syrian agreement, Quwatli and Mardam began to assume direct responsibility for ensuring that Palestine would become an integral part of Greater Syria, controlled by them from Damascus. Subsequently, in addition to rejecting the Zionist thrust for a Jewish state, the Syrian leaders also rebuffed

the demands of the mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin al-Husseini, for an independent Palestinian state under his control. Thus, for example, Mardam warned the British that France was using the mufti, who received political asylum in France in 1945-1946, to subvert the Syrian and British interests. In 1947-1948, Quwatli and Mardam clashed repeatedly with the mufti, particularly over the appointment of Fawzi al-Qawujji as head of the Arab Army of Salvation.

## De Gaulle and Truman

The Syrian documents enhance understanding of two significant events on the road to Israel's establishment: President Harry S Truman's letter of August 31, 1945, to British prime minister Attlee, demanding that Britain allow the immigration of 100,000 Jewish refugees from camps in Europe to Palestine; and the well-known speech by Soviet foreign minister Andrei Gromyko in the United Nations on May 14, 1947 endorsing the establishment of a Jewish state.

Ten days before Truman sent his letter, de Gaulle visited the United States for a first meeting with the president. De Gaulle attached considerable importance to the visit, as France desperately needed the United States' support for the restoration of its Great Power status in Europe and in its overseas colonies, particularly in Indo-China, and for solving its pressing economic problems. The Syrian crisis had greatly damaged France's standing in the United States, so it was vital for de Gaulle to prove to the Americans that Britain, which had conspired with the Syrians to expel France from its mandated territories, was the real culprit.

It can be assumed that to ensure secrecy, de Gaulle would have revealed details of the Anglo-Syrian agreement only to president Truman. In any event, from August 22-24 the two leaders held three meetings. On the 24th, the Syrian ambassador to Washington, Nazim al-Qudsi, reported to Damascus that he had been urgently summoned to the State Department and asked to present his government's response to the question of whether Syria had agreed to unite with Iraq and whether the Syrian government was colluding with the British government to this end.

Puzzled, the Syrian diplomat, who knew nothing about any such agreement, immediately transmitted the American request to Damascus. The denial by Syrian Prime Minister Faris al-Khuri did not allay American suspicions. On August 25, al-Qudsi reported that he had learnt that the United States would support the Jewish cause in order to prevent total British control in the Middle East. Six days later, President Truman sent his famous letter to the British prime minister.

In the following months, al-Qudsi reported on extremely hostile statements by American officials against the British and Syrian governments. Secretary of state James Byrnes stated that the British wanted to expel the French from Syria and Lebanon only to take over the oil resources. An American official wondered whether the United States had recognized Syria's independence only to see it come under British control, adding that "Britain, at this stage, is the true master of your country." Another diplomat declared that "Britain's intervention was intended to subjugate you and your economy, which is to say, it only seeks to colonize you." A further report reveals the Americans' opinion of what they viewed as ruinous British policy in Palestine. According to one diplomat, the British were responsible for the chaotic situation there, and he cautioned his Syrian interlocutor that Britain was exploiting the Jewish-Arab conflict in order "to achieve control in all the Arab states."

The Syrian diplomatic correspondence reveals also the intense Anglo-American rivalry over the exploitation of the Syrian economy. The British used their influence there to further the interests of British companies, at the expense of American firms. Terence Shone, now the British ambassador to Damascus, went so far as to warn Mardam against allowing American banks to operate in Syria, as "that would constitute capitalist colonial exploitation of the Syrian economy."

The Syrian government's refusal in 1947-1948 to grant a permit to the Trans-Arabian Pipeline company - Tapline - to lay an oil pipeline from Saudi Arabia through Jordan and Syria to the Mediterranean coast in Lebanon only increased American anger. Externally, it appeared that the Syrian government was acting in line with secret decisions made by the Arab League to boycott the Americans and the British because of their Palestine policy. In fact, the Syrians' refusal was tacitly encouraged by the British. In any event, Truman held the British government responsible and constantly pressured Bevin to compel Syria to grant Tapline the necessary permits.

## What did Ben-Gurion know?

The French were more than happy to supply president Truman with new proof of British scheming, particularly in Palestine. But did France inform the Soviet Union of the secret Anglo-Syrian agreement or of the British intention to forge an anti-Soviet regional alliance with the participation of Iraq, Syria and Turkey - a plan they also learned about from the British-Syrian correspondence? If the Soviets had known of this, they would certainly have done their utmost to foil the British designs in the region overall and in Palestine in particular. A comparison of the British-Syrian and Soviet-Syrian correspondence indeed reveals a recurrent pattern: Issues secretly raised by the British with the Syrians were referred to by the Soviets within days. For example, when the British demanded that their armed forces remain in Syria even after the French evacuation, the Soviet representative in Damascus, Daniel Solod, immediately protested. When the British invited the Syrian government to send delegates to a secret conference in London to discuss the defense of the Middle East against external threats, a Soviet official in Moscow protested to the Syrian representative, Faiz al-Khuri. These and other examples suggest that France kept the Soviets abreast of British activity in the Middle East and North Africa.

A more intriguing question is whether the French passed on information from their Syrian source to the heads of the Jewish Agency, David Ben-Gurion and Moshe Sharett. Was Ben-Gurion's almost prophetic ability during 1945-1948 to foresee regional and international developments and prepare the Yishuv (the Jewish community in Palestine) for a military confrontation with the Arab states based on prior knowledge of British and Arab secret intentions? Did his distrust of Britain's role in Palestine, portrayed by historians as "obsessive" and "paranoid," derive, like de Gaulle's suspiciousness, from accurate intelligence? Was Ben-Gurion's belief that the British were involved in a secret conspiracy with Arab leaders to prevent the establishment of a Jewish state based on information provided by the French? And did his fateful decision to declare the establishment of the State of Israel on May 14, 1948 - and later to impose major operational decisions on his generals - stem from secret information he received from the French about the Arabs' military plans?

Initial research was carried out in the last two months in three archives (the Ben-Gurion archives in Sde Boker, the Haganah archives in Tel Aviv and the Central Zionist Archives in Jerusalem), and Ben-Gurion's diaries, particularly his war diaries for December 1947-July 1949, were also consulted, with the aim of discovering whether information from the Syrian documents was made available to Ben-Gurion and whether he knew its exact origin. Also examined were the modes by which intelligence information was transmitted and those who were possibly involved on the Israeli side.

Within the framework of this article only a few of the findings can be cited. For example, on October 15, 1944, Ben-Gurion met in Beirut with General Paul Beynet, the French delegate general in Syria and Lebanon. Their meeting was probably arranged by Eliyahu Eilat (Epstein), who had met Beynet on September 6, a month after French intelligence learned of the secret British plan to expel France from Syria and Lebanon and foil the establishment of a Jewish state. Ben-Gurion recounts his meeting with General Beynet at length, particularly the emphasis he laid on the importance of a Jewish state for the existence of a Christian Lebanon.

On November 23, 1944, Ben-Gurion wrote in his diary that he had sent a letter with Captain Blanchard to Marc Jarblum, the representative of the Zionist Organization in France. Blanchard was an intelligence officer who had served with the forces of Free France in Syria and Lebanon during the war. In 1945, together with Tuvia Arazi, an intelligence officer and a liaison between the Jewish Agency and Free France, he accompanied Ben-Gurion to some of his meetings with French officials in Paris. Blanchard continued to be involved in the secret contacts between France and the Zionist movement or Israel in the following years. Ben-Gurion was in Paris in May and June 1945, when the Syrian crisis erupted. His diary entries show clearly that he endorsed wholeheartedly the French charges against the British. If Britain was ready to go to such extremes against France in Syria and Lebanon to ensure its regional status, it was obvious to him that it would be ready to impose its own solution on the Yishuv as well. In a diary entry on June 8, he noted that the French were seeking the cooperation of Jewish groups in order to undermine security in Palestine and that emissaries of the underground breakaway militias Etzel and Lehi had visited Beirut.

By September, it had become apparent that the Labour government did not intend to modify British policy in the Middle East. The French learned this from the Anglo-Syrian correspondence. On October 1, Ben-Gurion sent his well-known directive from Paris to Moshe Sneh, the head of the Haganah, instructing the defense forces to cooperate with Etzel and Lehi in armed resistance against British rule. The establishment of the united resistance movement was seen at the time as an extreme measure and was strongly criticized by some of Ben-Gurion's colleagues, as this ended a quarter-century of close cooperation between the Zionist movement and Britain. Ben-Gurion remained in Paris throughout nearly the whole of 1946 and early 1947, directing the struggle against the British from his temporary headquarters in the Royal Monceau Hotel on Avenue Hoche.

Other important discoveries relate to the three agreements the Jewish Agency entered into in 1946 with Egyptian Prime Minister Ismail Sidqi; with Emir Abdullah; and with the Maronite Church on a compromise solution for Palestine based on partition. These agreements can be better understood if one takes into account that all four parties involved were adversely affected by the Anglo-Iraqi-Syrian deal of 1945. The French provided details of the Anglo-Iraqi intrigues to the Egyptians and the Maronite church. As for Emir Abdullah, he may have heard about them from officials of the Jewish Agency, with which he had maintained close ties since the 1930s.

### The British withdrawal

The Syrian documents reveal the close ties that were formed between Lebanese Prime Minister Riyad al-Sulh and Brigadier Ilyd Clayton, whose official position was liaison officer to the Arab League in the British Middle East Office in Cairo. From 1946-1948, Sulh played an important part in the meetings of Arab leaders concerning Palestine, while Clayton had a key role in the British intelligence service in the Middle East after World War II.

The Syrian documents also show that in the summer of 1947, the Syrian leaders were concerned about some of Sulh's improved relations with France and his collaboration with the mufti, who then resided in Beirut. The Syrian ambassador in London, Najib Armanazi, who spoke with General Spears, informed Mardam that Sulh's policy was being coordinated with the British. In another report, Armanazi informed Mardam that Clayton had received a "carte blanche" to promote the Greater Syria plan, which was "still on the table." After meeting Sulh in Beirut, Mardam reported to president Quwatli that Sulh's activities were indeed being coordinated with the British. At the end of September 1947, a Haganah intelligence

agent reported that Riyadh al-Sulh and the mufti, with tacit British support, were planning to foment protests and strikes by Arab Palestinians in early October against the emerging partition plan. The report added that armed bands would be allowed to cross the border from Lebanon and attack Jewish settlements in the Galilee. It is noteworthy that in September and October, Brigadier Clayton was in Lebanon, where Arab League meetings took place to formulate joint Arab diplomatic and military policy in Palestine. Arab affairs experts who were advising Ben-Gurion doubted the agent's reports, but another expert on the subject, Jewish Agency representative Eliahu Sasson, who arrived in New York from Paris on the eve of UN discussions on partition, warned that these activities were being coordinated with the British.

In the next two weeks, Ben-Gurion placed the Yishuv on alert; forces were mobilized and sent to the Galilee, and Jewish settlements were fortified. Some historians have viewed this as an overreaction and a sign of panic, while others see it as merely a military exercise intended as a warning to the British. But if we take into account the information obtained by the French from their Syrian source on the close collaboration between Sulh and Clayton, which they had surely conveyed to Ben-Gurion or to the Haganah, Ben-Gurion's reaction is more readily understandable.

At the end of 1947 and in the early months of 1948, the French continued to send reports of Sulh's collaboration with Clayton, in some cases via Morris Fischer, a Yishuv intelligence officer who served with the forces of Free France in Syria and Lebanon until 1945, and was afterward appointed Jewish Agency representative in Paris. (He became nascent Israel's first ambassador to France.) For example, on January 13, Fischer reported that Clayton had reached a secret agreement with Sulh on the withdrawal of the British forces from the Galilee to Haifa, to give the Arab Army of Salvation freedom of maneuver.

These examples, and others not cited here, do not by themselves necessarily constitute unequivocal proof that the French shared information they gleaned from the Syrian documents with the Israelis. However, if we take into account the secret Anglo-Syrian agreement, the intense French hostility toward the British in the aftermath of their expulsion from Syria and Lebanon, and the close collaboration between France and the Zionist movement during 1945-1948, this possibility appears quite reasonable. In any case, the Syrian documents uncovered so far in French archives will oblige historians to reassess British policy in the postwar Middle East in general, and in Palestine in particular. It might be appropriate to conclude with the remark of the French consul general in Jerusalem, René Neuville, who declared in June 1948, at the height of the Jordanian Arab Legion's siege of Jerusalem: "There are those who pull the trigger and those who pull the strings.?"

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