

Faisal the Martyr.

From "Faisal" by Gerald De Gaury.

PRESENTED BY SHEHATA MAHFOUZ

In 1945, the late King Abdul Aziz said to one of his advisers, with a tear in his eye, " I only wish I had three Faisals. ,,

Faisal's Birth.

In the autumn of 1905, the news came that a son had been born to Ibn Saud, his third, but the first to be born to him in Riyadh since he had retaken it for his father three years earlier. He was 25 years old then. The child's name was Faisal and his mother was Tarfa, a daughter of one of the Al - ash - Shaikh family, or in short "Bint ash - Shaikh.

The significance to the Arabs of the name of Faisal's mother , who bore no other sons, was that her father descended from the puritan preacher Muhammad ibn Abdul-Wahab, who had in alliance with the Saud chieftain, over a hundred years earlier brought about a great militay — religious revival that led to the Saudi domains becoming for a time wider than ever before or since.

Faisaal's father was often away on his military expeditions. Meanwhile, his mother falling ill and dying while he was very young, he had been taken into the care of his maternal grandmother and so, as he became elder, into that of the revered and learned head of the Al-ash-Shaikh, her husband. The Koran and the Traditions of the Prophet were his first learning by heart, almost before he could read fluently, but that was not far behind. Faisal made good progress from the beginning, encouraged by his grandfather.

Every now and then Ibn Saud would send for Faisal and play with him, as he did with all his sons when small. Later he would

take him out with him on some small excursions. He was too young then to go on military expeditions or to go into Camps in the spring.

Faisal began to pick up tips from his father of a different kind from those he learnt from other men. He learnt from being with him -self- possession, patience discretion and the Arab inward pride.

Faisal's daily instruction was at the hands of his maternal grandfather and his learning of horsemanship, the handling of arms, and desert lore from elder boys and companions chosen for the purpose. His education, his behaviour and knowledge of politics, of handling men and of the principalities and tribes came from his father.

Boyhood

Faisal, like his brothers was trained to walk barefoot, to rise two hours before dawn, to eat sparingly and to ride bareback.

Faisal's maternal grandfather, one of the most revered pillars of Islam in Riyadh, had been concerned in measures for the revival and the boy Faisal, then aged 7, living mostly with him, came to know much that was going on.

In 1918 Ibn Saud attacked Ibn Rashid. He made his base at Tarafiya and gave his son Turki command of the forward divisions. Faisal had been left at Tarafiya, though he saw something of the fighting when part of the baggage train and its escort were attacked near al Yatib and driven off with casualties, ten men killed, after a sharp action.

At Tarafiya Faisal and Fahad welcomed their father on his return with a customary kiss on both sides and on the top of his nose.

His First Journey to England

When the next year Ibn Saud was invited to London to discuss outstanding questions, he himself felt unable to leave, named his son Faisal, aged 14, appointing one Ahmed al Thunaiyan al Saud to

advise him. With him there also went Abdulla al Qusaibi a Najdi merchant partly resident in Bahrain, who spoke English and was a travelled man, together with three retainers.

During the journey Ahmed al-Thunaiyan used to refer to Ibn Saud as "King of Najd " and no one guessed at that time that the Hijaz would fall to Ibn Saud, or that the 14-year-old boy on his way to England would rule it as his Viceroy for three decades.

The King, in the company of the Queen and Princess Mary, received the Central Arabian Party in the Throne Room at Buckingham Palace on the morning of the 30th October. Faisal presented the two splendid swords he had brought for the purpose and a letter of compliments from his father, signed incidentally as Hakim (ruler) of Najd and al Hasa, al Qatif, and Jubail, its dependancies, and Chieftain of its tribes. He was given two signed photographs in return and H.M. assured him that the Ministers would discuss with the Mission matters of political concern. He took the opportunity to condole with him for the loss of three of ibn Saud's sons and numbers of his people in the influenza epidemic.

In London Faisal had met the English Ministers concerned with the East, Lord Curzon and Lord Montagu, and officials of the Foreign Office and India Office who dealt with Arabian affairs.

A letter signed by the King at the end of November had already been delivered to Faisal for taking to his father, together with the two signed photographs handed to him in the Palace during his audience. The King's letter spoke of his pleasure at receiving his son Faisal and Ahmed al Thunaiyan and said that it was his desire that the bonds of friendship should be strengthened and include all the the Arab States. He trusted now that the war had ended, all the chieftains and peoples might live together in freedom, peace and unity. The Government would support all ibn Saud's efforts to that end.

Faisal in Asir

No sooner had Faisal returned from Europe than his father gave

The Imam was so slow in complying with these terms that on 24 th May Ibn Saud threatened to resume hostilities, whereupon the Imam arrested and handed over the Idrisi family, chief cause of the delay, to Ibn Saud. A copy of this ratified treaty was sent by the Imam with Abdulla al Wazir to Faisal for the working out of details of its execution in Hodaida. By the end of June the war was over and no doubt Faisal's force had behaved admirably.

For the first time the Saudi forces were partly mechanized. Faisal's men made good use of motor vehicles, a simple kind of armoured car, in overtaking and cutting off retreating yemenis and had used trucks for supplies. Some of his men were embarked on small ships to land behind the enemy, a Surprise which was effective.

Faisal was very welcome on his return from the front and Ibn Saud went out a long way, to Ranya, to meet him.

Capture of The Hijaz.

A year after his military triumph in Asir in 1924, Faisal had joined his father, with reinforcements from Najd, during his invasion of the Hijaz and was in command of an army during the year long siege of Jeddah, whose surrender marked the end of the war. He was then 21 years of age and was to remain as Viceroy of the Hijaz and was in command of an army during the year end of the war, and Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to his father, resident in Meecca, for nearly thirty years.

Faisal was sent to besiege Jeddah and begin a desultory bombardment with no orders to assault it yet. Ibn Saud's instructions to Faisal not to assault were clear.

By the end of 1925 conditions were so bad and hope so low that Ali was persuaded to abdicate when it became known that Faisal was preparing to assault, By doing so he would prevent casualties and looting. The year long siege was over.

A fortnight after the surrender of Jeddah to Faisal, Ibn Saud himself came to it from Mecca and having met the notables and foreign consuls at the Medina Gate soon afterwards went quietly off to the Friday Mosque and was there acclaimed as the King of the Hijaz. Accepted would perhaps be a better word than acclaimed:

No trumpets sounded. No ceremonies were observed, for none by tradition existed.

The Viceroy.

After the capture of the Hijaz, the King made Faisal his Viceroy and Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and Faisal resided in Mecca and did not often visit Jeddah, from where Christians were forbidden to leave for the interior or go more than five Kilometres beyond the walls except with special permission and escorts provided by the King.

The King took to sending Faisal abroad to make direct contact with foreign governments, partly because Faisal was not very well and seemed to need a change and also to represent his views now that he was King of the Hijaz. He sent Faisal on a tour of western Europe in the autumn of 1926

Before he went, a Consultative Council was formed in Mecca by the King's order with Faisal as President with a casting vote in case of need. it was designed to give the people of the Hijaz a means of participating in the Government, having eight appointed members and eight balloted members, their appointment subject to the King's approval. Finally it was to give way before the increasing responsibilities of the Council of Ministers, usually sitting in Riyadh, of which Faisal became the head as Prime Minister, but all the years while he was Viceroy in the Hijaz he was President of the Consultative Council .

The Second Visit to England

The Journey began in August, 1926. Within a week of arriving at

Plymouth he was given a luncheon by His Majesty's Government at Claridges, and was meeting and talking with officials and politicians whose attitude to his father's regime had changed. The Sultan of Najd had become a King, Controlling Mecca, in formal relations with Britain which it was hoped to embody in a new treaty, head of state through the pilgrimage was influential and probably viable, and whose frontiers — which it was intended to settle in the new treaty — marched with those of the British mandatory territories of Iraq and the Trucial States with their special relations with Britain.

The official talks were broken off for such diversions as an air trip over London, a visit to the Crabbet Park Stud, to see the descendants of the Arab horses brought back from Hail by Lady Ann Blunt and her husband half a century earlier, The Saudis had removed to Riyadh the best of the horses remaining in Hail when they had taken it five years before, in 1921, as Faisal knew.

After a visit of under three weeks, Faisal left for Holland, where the Arabists of Leiden University and the officials dealing with Holland's Far-East Muslem territories were agog to meet him. Other visits abroad were to follow, in 1932 to Paris, then London for ten days' stay while en route for Poland, Russia and Turkey, in 1939 to London for the Palestine Conference; in all some thirteen long and official tours including five weeks in America in 1943 and one to the Far East, without counting some lesser journeys to nearby countries. On his journeys during and after the Second World War and as head of his delegation to U.N.O. he had discussions with President Roosevelt, Eisenhower, Truman and Kennedy and met President Johnson before he succeeded to the Presidency.

Apart from all the people he met abroad, there were more and more heads of state, rulers and visitors of standing to Riyadh. One-way and another Faisal has met, and remembered, a greater number and variety of his fellow men than anyone else alive,

Faisal's Visit to America

In May 1942, during the visit of the Minister, Alexander Kirk, to Riyadh, the desire for a visit to America by Saud, the Crown Prince

then, was mentioned and a year later, following up the suggestion, an invitation was sent to the King, or alternatively to any member of his family he might name. In spite of war conditions Ibn Saud accepted, later naming his sons Faisal and Khalid (H.M. King Khalid) as his replacements.

The party arrived in Miami in the last week of September 1943, by way of Central Africa, Accra, Ascension Island and South America, being met on landing by a representative of the President.

They spent the night at the home of Mr. Charles Spruks, a State Department official, who afterwards wrote of it and showed his pleasure and some surprise at the naturalness and at the same time intelligent inquisitiveness of Prince Faisal. He wished to see all over the house, asked numerous questions and at supper helped himself. His adaptability was noticeable "When in Rome" but it seems to have astonished some Americans that though retaining his Arab dress Faisal, who had been visiting European countries since 1919, exhibited the always splendid manners and equanimity of his race, adapting himself with perfect ease to Western life.

In Washington they were received by President Roosevelt and Mr. Cardell Hall and put up as state visitors at Blair House. Faisal brought with him, for presentation to the President from his father, an exceptionally fine Arab sword, its blade damascened, its hilt bejewelled and the scabbard mounted in gold.

On the very first evening in Washington the President gave a dinner of forty covers in honour of Faisal and Khalid. The guests, led by the Vice-President, included the leading members of the Cabinet, the Senate and Congress, with the senior officers of the services in Washington.

It was arranged that there would be another meeting of Faisal with the President, by whom the Prince was much impressed, on November 9th, the day before his departure.

From Washington the party went to New York for six days, accompanied by Mr. Carry Owen of Aramco, who remained with the party until it left.

From New York they went by private rail-road car to Los Angeles and San Francisco, spending a week in each of them. Tours from them were arranged by the Texas and Standard Oil Companies, then the two partners in Aramco, which took a large part in arranging the visit. Visits were made to such institutions as a sheep-breeding station near Gallop in New Mexico, a petrified forest in Arizona.

They were taken to see a date-farm, the Kellogg horse ranch, the Standard Oil Company's refinery, motion picture studios in Hollywood, Princeton, where they met the Arabist Professor Hitti, and to visit various irrigation schemes, dams, and water-powered works. Returning to the west by Denver and Detroit Faisal met in Washington Mr. Stettinius, acting for the Secretary of State from whom he was taking over and Assistant Secretary Adolf A. Berle, Jr. During their lengthy talks covering the policies in the Middle East, requirements under Lend-Lease and provision of silver currency the Prince was given a memorandum mentioning the favourable view the United States Government would have of building of a refinery by the California Arabian Standard Oil Company at Dhahran.

From Washington, after taking farewell of the President, Faisal returned for a few days in New York. He visited the Naval Academy, Baltimore, on 7th November and left three days later by British Overseas Airways clipper, pausing at the Bermudas, en route for England.

England in Wartime.

The party arrived in England on the 17th November (1943) and was put up in the Dorchester Hotel.

They went to a number of army units and saw the latest armour manoeuvring. The Navy showed them over a submarine which had sunk a large number of enemy ships.

The Air Force arranged for them to see and enter bombers about to leave for Berlin, the pilots and crew giving matter of fact

accounts of their role and how the bombs were to be released in another hour or so on the enemy capital. The Princes were asked not to wish the crews good luck or safe return, it was felt unlucky to do so. They asked the station commander, nevertheless, if they might know whether the aircraft they had entered did, in fact, return safely and by the time they returned to their hotel found an arranged message conveying that it had in fact done so. It was a long time before they reached London owing to increasing fog. On their way, there was a noise of bombs falling not far away and, when one exploded much nearer, the despatch riders halted and came to say that there was a shelter they believed not far off. Should they guide the car to it, they asked? Both Princes in one voice said that they preferred to go on and put their trust in God above ground.

The two Princes went to 10 Downing Street to present an Arab sabre, with a jewelled hilt and gold encrusted scabbard, to Winston Churchill from their father in the absence of the Prime Minister from London they were received by Mrs. Winston Churchill on his behalf and it was decided that she would do so in the Cabinet Room, where fateful wartime decisions had been taken.

Before leaving they went to Buckingham Palace to see the King. The Palace itself was bombed during the war. It was the King's second war, for as he said to Faisal at another visit two years later, "I was in the Navy in the first war, you know, and in the Second one I had quite a bit to do." using the kind of modest phrasing which Faisal himself employs.

The party flew back to Arabia via Gibraltar to Algiers, where the Prince met General de Gaulle, Tunis to spend the night with the Bey, Tripoli for one night and a few days in Egypt. He had had three months of unforgettable experiences.

U. N. O

In 1945 Faisal was head of the Saudi Arabian delegation at the San Francisco meeting of U.N.O. and made a speech which showed that he believed in its role for the good of the world, speaking real-

istically about it and not forgetting to recall the former President of the United States and his work in initiating the conference in which they were taking part. It was an excellent and wellreceived speech and Faisal has continued to give U.N.O. his support in spite of a setback in 1947 and the inefficacy of U.N.O.'s mission in the Yemen in 1963. As head of his delegation in New York in 1947 he was accepted, because of his long interest in the chief matter in question, the Palestine problem and his qualities of leadership, as spokesman for the Arab delegations.

Faisal the Prime Minister

During the crisis that had taken place in Saudi Arabia, a decree was issued transferring full power to Prince Faisal and he became the Prime Minister. Faisal lost no time in undertaking his task.

The most pressing matters were Finance and Foreign Relations. Three weeks later, on the 18th April, he issued a communique on the radio to explain the concerns of his Government in its foreign relations. As was to be expected the first part dealt with relations with the United Arab Republic and referred to a desire for friendship with every State which is not hostile to the Saudi Arabian Government which believed in positive neutrality and itself had not entered into foreign alliances. There were references to the principles of U.N.O. and the Islamic Code.

It then went to speak of its relations with Great Britain, mentioning at once the question of Buraimi and foreshadowed a renewal of diplomatic relations cut off after Suez, as soon as this outstanding problem was settled.

Relations with France had suffered owing to the sabotage of electrical plant in the factory at al Kharj following the question of a restitution of monies owed in consequence of export of arms, already paid for, having been stopped by the French Government at the time of the Suez affair. When these matters were settled there was no reason why relations should not be renewed, provided that Algeria were granted her liberty and independence.

With regard to relations with the United States, it referred to the position in the Gulf of Akaba and Israel's activities there already dealt with in letters to the President. It touched upon the nature of the agreement over the airport at Dhahran and took the opportunity to say that there was no American base there. "All the American Government has there is the right of passage for certain aircraft and for the supply of oil. It is not the seat of any military force, nor is it a store for military arms. The passage of arms and warlike material is not permitted "

The lengthy communiqué ended, 'H. M.'s Government expresses its sorrow at the storm which is blowing over a group of Arab States, bringing about what is against the interests of the Arabs and contrary to their honour H.M.'s Government will do its best to restore a state of calm, quietening the wind of this tempest. When it finds reciprocity in its efforts it will work with Zeal to further peacefulness between all the Arab States "

The Financial Problem

Faisal's other problem, his own national finances, received his attention at once. It was not a moment too early. The Treasury was empty. The flight of capital was continuing. The Government was in debt. Some 400,000,000 Riyals, or 100,000,000 dollars, was owed to banks and local merchants and one of the local banks was on the point of becoming insolvent so that it had to receive a promise of Government backing for the sake of its despositors and merge with another bank. The Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency founded in April 1952, which had hitherto been able to do little more than observe and deplore the plight of the currency, was given proper authority and was able to issue its first balanced budget and with other measures taken bring the Saudi Riyal to 4.50 to the U.S.Dollar. It had been as low as 7 Riyals to the dollar.

Commercial banks were obliged to maintain 15 per cent of their total deposit as statutory reserves with the Monetary Agency and since 1960, the Agency's reserve holdings have substantially exceeded the Note Issue . By the end of 1958 a surplus for debt retirement

was realized. The Privy Purse's expenditure was progressively reduced over the next six years by two thirds, one visible effect of which can be seen in Riyadh, where a number of palatial houses were abandoned in various stages of building. The greatest increase in government expenditure was on Public Instruction, the next on health. A large part of the income from oil and a sum from a settlement made with the oil company was devoted to worthwhile projects, in mineral, communications and industrial development.

Within five years from being upon the brink of disaster, Faisal's policy brought the country to a state when the head of the Monetary Agency was able to write, "Under the leadership of King Faisal, Saudi Arabia is entering a fresh era of prosperity and rapid social change. His Majesty has an acute awareness of the problems which so naturally arise in a rapidly growing economy. He has shown great determination to face the challenge of economic development and is giving his wholehearted attention to it, I therefore remain most optimistic about the prospects of Saudi Arabia. Oil revenue which is the backbone of the Government incomes at present, will probably double within the next ten years the economic future of the Kingdom appears to be very bright indeed.

Faisal the Man

Faisal took care to show a personal example in various ways. His own expenditure became less. His way of life had always been very simple. He often drove himself even in the capital, and without the escort of car-loads of soldiers, motorcyclists and bodyguards hanging on to rails on the side of the car. He continued to live in the same house, both then and later, driving every morning to the Council of Ministers' office, for the meetings of the Council and the study and issuing of the Royal Decrees, for the reception of visitors, always numerous and including, apart from Saudi Arabs, a stream of foreigners, rulers great and small, Islamic notables, oil magnates, politicians, scientists and experts. The Saudi Arabs included a variety of persons who by Arabian and patriarchal tradition have to be seen, if not in the office, then later, for a meal or coffee-drinking — the more important Emirs of provinces and districts, the Sheikhs of

provinces and districts, the Sheikhs of great tribes, leading Ulema, members of the Saudi clan and his near though numerous relatives.

All this is undertaken by him with patient understanding, without the pomp which might be seen in other countries with the aid of chamberlains, secretaries and henchmen - clerks with very good manners and a flair for knowing who is who without asking. So smoothly is it all managed that even those kept waiting a little hardly notice it, what with coffee drinking, the comings and goings of picturesque visitors, of oriental celebrities and mysterious strangers, the whispered consultations and polite exchanges, the move from a Chamberlain's office to the Royal ante-room adroitly done.

Farewell

Suddenly, on the 13th of Rabi' AlAwal 1395, at a time when the Arab world was in great need of his wisdom and discretion, King Faisal, the Martyr, gave up his soul and departed this life to take his place in Paradise. His death wrung our hearts. His death caused a great shock, not only to the Arab or Islamic world but to the whole world. He was our leader and our King. No doubt he recorded a page of glory in the History of the Arab world.

At those difficult moments, His Majesty King Khalid ibn Abdul Aziz succeeded and beside him stood His Highness Prince Fahd ibn Abdul Aziz the Crown Prince. This has been our only consolation. All Arabs hurried from far and wide to console them for the great loss and to take the oath of allegiance to them.

Indeed, Saudi Arabia is the maker of men.

ملخص الأبحاث
بالإنجليزية