

"The Impossible Peace - 70 Years after The World War 2 in the Middle East"

Prologue

4. Britain's triple tongue diplomacy during World War I (1)

When talking about the Middle East after the World War II, it is inevitable to mention about "triple tongue diplomacy" by Britain during the World War I.

World War I was a war between two groups. One is UK, France and their allies including Japan. The other side is Germany, Austria and Ottoman Empire. UK, France and its allies defeated German allies. In 1919 the Versailles Treaty was concluded at the Paris Peace Conference on postwar treatments led by UK and France. This treaty was extremely harsh for the defeated Germany and Ottoman Empire. Germany ceded its territory and also was forced a huge compensation. It was the system called the winner-take-all. The UK and France also did not forgive the Ottoman Empire. Except for Asia Minor UK and France forfeited Levant, Tigris & Euphrates regions from Ottoman Empire, where she has been the lord in the long history. It is a finish of colonial acquisition games by the European imperialistic nations continuing from the 19th century. The Arab people who has been living in that area for a long time has been totally neglected.

During the World War I UK made three promises – the McMahon-Hussein Correspondence, the Sykes-Pico Agreement and the Balfour Declaration. They were the roots of all evil at present in the Middle East. Each of these three promises were concluded with different partners, and totally conflicted each other. Therefore, these series of UK diplomacy were criticized as triple tongue diplomacy. It was not only critically acknowledged, but it brought about disaster to the whole region of the Middle East, and the disaster has been continuing for one hundred years.

(1) McMahon-Hussein Correspondence

The first of these three promises is a series of ten letters between Henry McMahon, the British High Commissioner in the Sultanate of Egypt, and Hussein bin Ali, Sharif of Makkah from July 1915 to March 1916. As the reward of the war against Ottoman Empire, McMahon promised independence of Arabs. He wrote a letter to Hussein on 24 October 1915, saying as follows.

"I am empowered in the name of the Government of Great Britain to give the following assurances and make the following reply to your letter:

Subject to the above modifications, Great Britain is prepared to recognize and support the Independence of the Arabs within the territories included in the limits and boundaries proposed by the Sherif of Mecca"

Hussein was born in historic house as a 39th direct descendant of the Prophet Muhammad. He was the

Sherif of Makkah and the King of the Hizjaz, reigning the Red Sea coastal zone. Hussein, who was supported by UK, ordered his sons Abdallah and Faisal to attack the Ottoman Empire. Abdallah later became the King of Jordan and grandfather of Abdallah II. And Faisal became the King of Iraq. Two sons fought guerrilla war against Ottoman Empire.



It was this moment that the British military officer Thomas Edward Lawrence, so-called "Lawrence of Arabia", worked as a operation staff of King Faisal. The name of "Lawrence of Arabia" might give the impression that Lawrence himself created his own tactics and led ignorant Arabs to the victory. However, this was wholly illusion made by UK. He was merely a liaison officer of the British Army. His duty was the agency of military logistics such as war chest, weapons and ammuniton supplied from the UK to the Arabs.

He himself believed that his country would faithfully keep the promise of the McMahon-Hussein Correspondence. However, after the war, the land actually allocated to the Arabs was far from their expectation. T.E. Lawrence lost the trust of Arabs. His heart was broken and he returned to UK. He afterwards lost his own life by a motorcycle accident.

In the Arab world, Lawrence is regarded as "a tool of the UK" and has not been appreciated at all. On the other hand, Western people who is the winner of the war created a hero at one's descretion.

(To be continued ----)

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