

SECRET

ROUTING AND RECORD SHEET

FROM:

Accession No.

Date Rec'd SA

FILE - 6-517
A-21161
6-1431

FEB 14 1944

To	Room No.	Date		Officer's Initials	Comments
		Rec'd	Fwd'd.		
1.				<i>JS</i>	
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					
6.					
7.					
8.					
9.					
10.	ROOM 100				

DISSEMINATED - F.L.R.
MAR 1 1944

file 6-517
transferred
to

DECLASSIFIED AND RELEASED BY
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
SOURCE METHOD EXEMPTION 3B2B
NAZI WAR CRIMES DISCLOSURE ACT
DATE 2006

Each comment should be numbered to correspond with number in To column.
A line should be drawn across sheet under each comment.
Officer Designations should be used in To column.
Each Officer should initial (check mark insufficient) before further routing.
Action desired or action taken should be indicated in Comments column.
Routing sheet should always be returned to Registry.
For Officer Designations see separate sheet.

(X)

FEB 14 1944
No. 3 1431
Jerusalem

THE BANNANA PLANTATION AT KERAK

III. Muhammad el-Khalidi

Supplementary To A 14329 (Continuation of reports No. 9487 and 9477)
R.S. 14329 (11)

Muhammad el-Khalidi, an Arab of vision and former banana-planter of Palestine, is about 66 years old, was born in Jubah and urbanized there, has never been modern in aspect, but is most modern in far-seeing vision. His education was limited.

I. About 1879 - 1880 he first bought land in the plain of Jericho, along the southern bank of Wadi el Kelt. He also purchased the springs of Fawwar and Wadi el Kelt in the rocky masses of the latter name. During the first years ~~Muhammad~~ flooded bits of land, planted grain and vegetables, and irrigated with the winter overflow from the Kelt. In drought years the Kelt dried up prematurely, and his crops failed, - the water supply was too insecure.

II. By 1913 he had obtained a clear title deed to the water in the Kelt gorge and the tract of desert south of the Wadi el Kelt, from the foothills to the Jordan and stretching nearly as far as the Dead Sea.

A. There are remains of some six ancient aqueducts in the gorge. Muhammad decided to repair one to give him a steady supply of water, summer as well as winter.

B. Just prior to "World War One" Muhammad borrowed 4000 gold pounds and invested most in imported cement. The outbreak of war put a stop to importation, but nothing daunted, he bought the Greek convent in the Jordan Valley had stocks of cement, he pushed on with the reconstruction.

C. At this time there were many deserters from the Turkish army, among them Christian Arab and Armenian artisans. These he hired, fed and lodged in the mill or in the Greek Orthodox Convent of St. George. He fed as well a band of armed Turkish deserters, he protected them, and any officer who might have sought the deserters he "kept content".

D. When his money gave out, he started dealing in wheat at Kerak in Trans-Jordan, supplying it to the Turkish army, and made 4500 Turkish gold pounds, all of which, along with the income from the mill, was in turn invested in the aqueduct. From the income of small irrigated vegetable gardens around the mill, he maintained a large family dependent on him.

E. The aqueduct was finally completed about the time of Allenby's occupation.

III. Soon after this Muhammad el-Khalidi started planting bananas on large tracts. Up till then the banana was a rare fruit, grown only in small quantities in the orange groves of Jaffa and Jericho.

A. When the plantation outgrew the water supply he extended the canal up to Ain Fawwar (the "dubbler") an intermittent spring, that may fail in drought years.

IV. About this time Jerusalem had outgrown its old cistern and inadequate water supply piped in from Solomon's Pools, Ain Fawwar. The municipality, disregarding Muhammad's claims to the ownership of the water, built a line of road to the spring, and at a cost of £15,000, drew and pumped the water up to the then existing Ain Fawwar installation, where it was twice re-lifted to Jerusalem. During the second summer the Fawwar spring dried up, and a continuation of the pipe was made up to the Wadi el Kelt springs. In recompense for half the water the municipality paid Muhammad £3000 the first year, and £2500 the second.

(X)

Muhammad

A. As soon as the first municipal contract was signed, Muhammad pushed a concrete canal from the end of his aqueduct right to his far-flung groves, thus saving as much from waste as the Jerusalem Municipality was taking, so that his plantations did not suffer, nor did he have to re-plant the area. Thus he was the first person in Palestine to construct and privately own an irrigating aqueduct for its length, cost, and the vision behind it. Since then, Government and Jewish and Arab colonies have constructed many such advertised irrigating systems.

on a

B. With no waste, no through leakage and seepage, Muhammad was able to irrigate 350 dunams of banana plantation, and succeeded in raising an especially fine fruit which before that time had been largely luxuriant in Palestine.

Scale

His example has been widely followed, so that the Arabs of Palestine now own 3000 dunams of banana plantations, mostly in the lower Jordan Valley, with an addition of 1100 on the Transjordan side of the valley. Likewise the Jews, mostly the Kibbutz settlements around Galilee, the Middle Jordan Valley, and less in the Coastal Plain, own another 2300 dunams, a total of 6400 dunams, yielding a yearly average crop of 6500 tons, valued at \$ 150,000.

DISTRIBUTION:

- Tech.
- Len.
- JICA
- BLO (2)
- Files (3)

Date of Info: 20/1/44
 Cairo date : 30/1/44
 Source : ~~same~~
 Evaluation : A-3

CONFIDENTIAL
 B-12