

# Goodbye, Glubb Pasha

**S**ir John Bagot Glubb died in his sleep last week in a little British country village at the age of 88. Few North Americans may be familiar with this remarkable man, but to the last generation of Britons, Sir John — better known as Glubb Pasha — rivaled Lawrence of Arabia in fame and glory.

Glubb served gallantly in World War I where he was three times wounded and decorated with the Military Cross. In 1920 Glubb volunteered for service in Iraq, which had recently passed as a prize of war from the Turks to British mandate rule. Seconded to the newly formed Iraq Constabulary, the young officer quickly became enchanted by desert life and the Bedouin troops whom he led.

Action was not long in coming. At the time, fanatical Islamic fundamentalists of the Wahabi sect were raiding Iraq from their bases in northeastern Arabia. The Wahabis — from whom came the ruling Saudi dynasty, considered the nomads and shepherds of Iraq as heretics fit only to be killed and despoiled.

Glubb quickly formed up a highly mobile force of Bedouin horsemen that managed to fight off the Wahabi raiders, restore order along the border and protect the fledgling state of Iraq. In 1926, Glubb joined the Iraqi government and became, *de facto*, the governor of the border region with Arabia. In four years Glubb pacified the region, imposed British order and earned the deep friendship of Iraq's many peoples.

In 1930 Glubb was asked by London to go to the mandate territory of Transjordan (later to become Jordan) and help form its new army. Sir John set about the task with gusto, creating a little army of Bedouin tribesmen that came to be known as the Arab Legion. At the outbreak of World War II, Glubb assumed command of the Legion and led its Bedouin warriors into battle against the enemies of the Crown.

Glubb Pasha formed the core of the Arab Legion from the warlike tribute of the Beni Hashm, turning its fierce desert raiders into disciplined troops. Under Glubb, the Arab Legion became the Mideast's finest fighting force. The splendid Bedouin soldiers of the Legion came from the same tribes that Lawrence had led into battle against the Turks. And, as in the case of Lawrence, they came to adore Glubb Pasha, whom they called "father."

Commanding the forces of Jordan's King Abdullah, Sir John — now bearing the Turkish military

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title of Pasha — rode at the head of his Bedouin troops. Britons thrilled at photos of Glubb Pasha, romantically garbed in riding breeches and the flowing, red-checked Arab headdress called *kuffiyah*.

With Glubb in the van, the Legion marched into Syria to battle Vichy-French troops. Then the Legion moved into Iraq where it crushed the pro-German rebellion of Rashid Ali.

By 1946 Glubb Pasha was one of the most powerful men in the Mideast but the rising tide of nationalism was soon to overtake England's last great

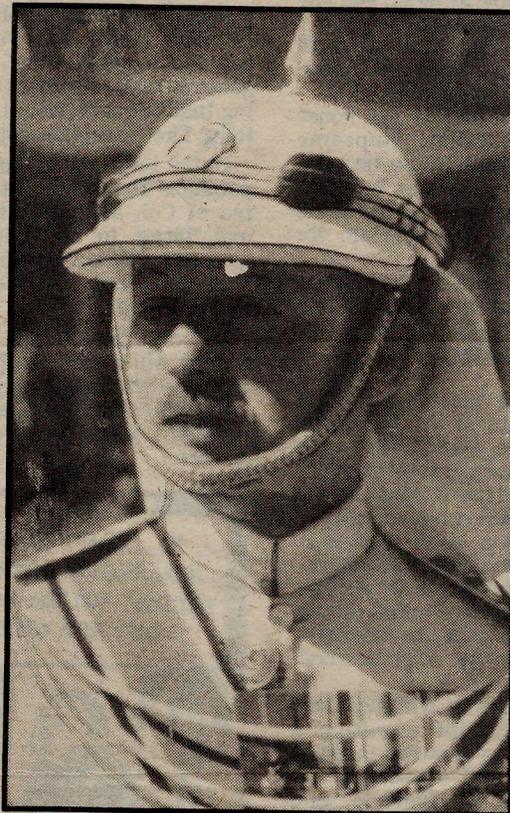
leader of native troops. In 1948 came the creation of Israel and the division of Palestine. The Arab Legion fought to defend the Old City of Jerusalem and proved the only effective Arab army. Yet Glubb was charged by many Jordanians with restraining the Legion on orders from London, preventing its tough Bedouin troops from pushing Jewish forces back to the coastal plain.

Glubb Pasha, the man who so loved his Arab troops and the Mideast, tragically became the target of rising Arab nationalism. In 1956, after Britain, France and Israel tried to overthrow Egypt's Nasser, Glubb Pasha was finally forced to resign from the Legion. He returned to an England that was no longer home. Like Lawrence, Glubb's heart and soul remained in the desert with his troops.

Sir John used his remaining years to produce a series of superb histories of the Mideast that have become required reading for all students of the sub-

ject. He never once expressed a single word of bitterness over his abrupt expulsion from Jordan. To this day, his old Bedouin soldiers still speak of Glubb Pasha with awe and love.

A few British officers may still remain with the army of the Sultan of Oman, but Glubb's death marks the end of a glorious epoch of British adventure. And of all his many honors and decorations, Glubb's most prized one is: "Defender of the Shepherds of Iraq". No one will ever bear this title again. RIP.



**GEN. JOHN GLUBB**  
Rivaled Lawrence of Arabia