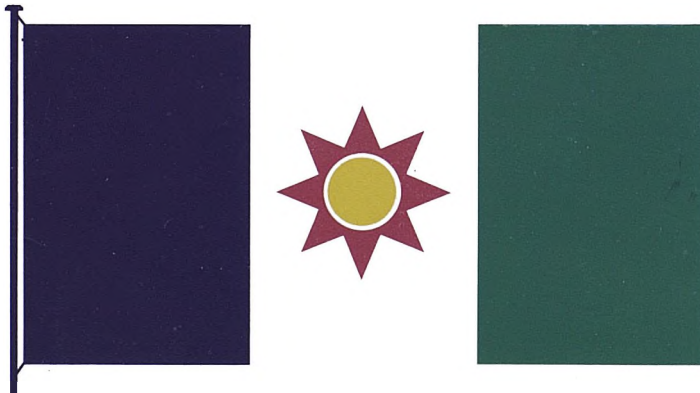


IRAQ UNDER QASSEM

"IRAQ UNDER QASSEM"



National Emblem



National Flag

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IRAQ UNDER QASSEM

A Political History, 1958-1963

Uriel Dann

Reuven Shiloah Research Center
Tel Aviv University

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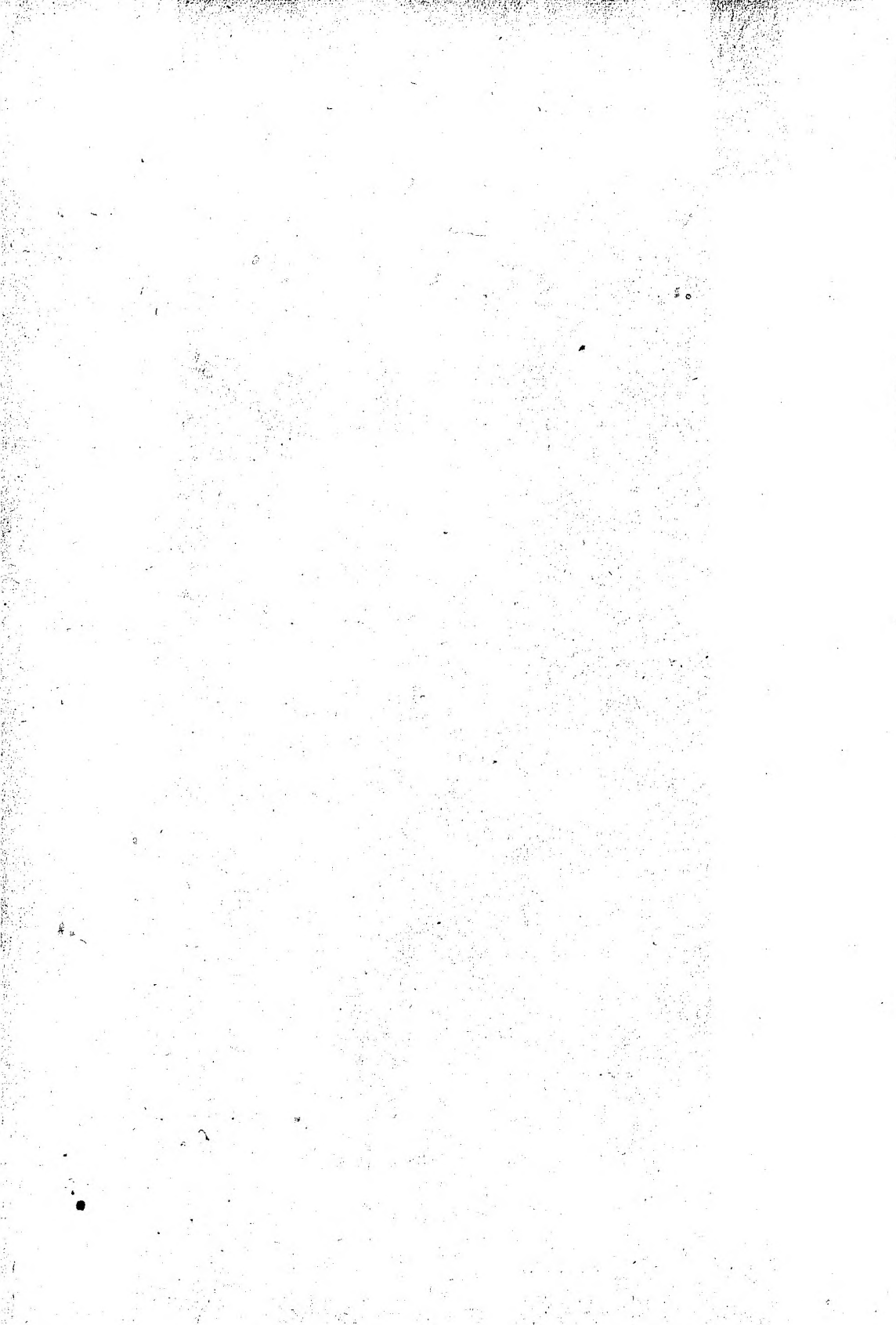
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The Reuven Shiloah Research Center forms a part of the Department of Middle Eastern and African History at Tel Aviv University. Its main purpose is to contribute, by research, to the expansion of knowledge and understanding of the modern history and current affairs, both political and social, of the Middle East and Africa; emphasis is laid on fields where Israel scholarship is in a position to make specialized contributions.

To Lore



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FOREWORD

In the contemporary Arab world power is pursued, legitimized and employed in ways which often call to mind precedents from other parts of the world. However, these analogies, and the terminologies they suggest, have so far contributed very little to an explanation of phenomena in Arab politics. Nor have the simplistic, highly polarized terms in which the Arabs themselves tend to describe their politics offered much insight into the problem. Surprisingly enough, terms like "Revolutionaries" versus "Reactionaries", "People" versus "Feudalists and Monopolists" and "Arab Nationalists" versus "Imperialist Stooges" were sometimes adopted uncritically outside the Arab world as well and employed either in their crude forms or in more polished terms. Yet, with the march of events, as one coup d'état follows the other, and worn-out political slogans give way to new ones, the inadequacy of the popular formulas (most of which had been conceived in the 1950's under the impact of the rise of Nasserism) become apparent, and a re-examination of Arab politics is called for.

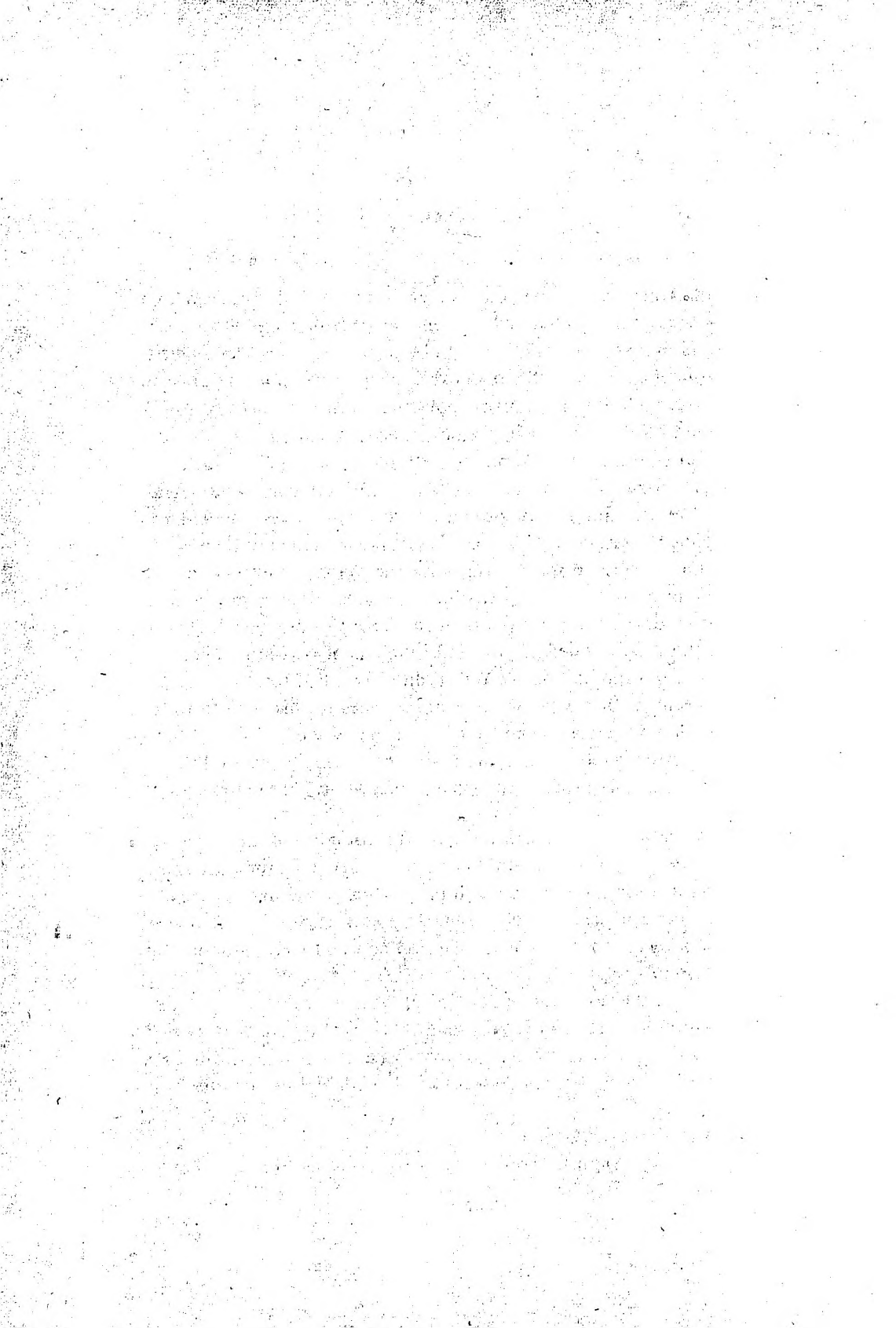
It becomes evident that whatever new approaches to this subject are to emerge, we shall have to rely on a better knowledge of the realities of Arab politics. Thus a need is felt for more monographs written by well-informed scholars on the various aspects and phases of political developments in the Arab states.

It was this realization which motivated the founders of the Reuven Shiloah Research Center, headed by Mr Yitzhak Oron its animating spirit and first director, to initiate the research programme which has since been occupying the central place in the Center's rapidly expanding activities. Thus, it was not by chance that the first subject chosen for the Monograph Series was Qassem's regime as a case study in Arab revolutions.

It is fitting that Dr Uriel Dann of our Center, whose discipline is political history and whose expertise is the contemporary Fertile Crescent should have devoted himself to this subject. His work, the Center hopes, will serve all those who seek a fuller understanding of Middle Eastern affairs.

Reuven Shiloah Research Center,
Tel Aviv University, August, 1968

Shimon Shamir



PREFACE

The subtitle of this study points to a deliberate limitation. The term "political" has been interpreted narrowly to express the nature of the overt and non-violent struggle for supremacy in the state, waged by personalities and groups whose public *raison d'être* is to achieve that supremacy by overt and non-violent means. That the present tale is so often of conspiracy and violence is a product of the Iraqi condition, which I have tried to analyse as well as to describe. But to recount these developments is not the purpose of this work, nor do they form its main burden. Following this interpretation of politics, the foreign affairs of Iraq under Qassem also assume a secondary role. They are related, as far as feasible, to the internal struggle for power. Economic and social matters are treated similarly, although their general importance is realized.

Still, politics in this restricted sense remains the most significant aspect of the Iraqi scene between 1958 and 1963. The 1958 revolution opened a new chapter in the modern history of the country. It cleared the ring for a contest where each of the forces which had welcomed the change might hope to achieve its own aims, distinct from, and generally incompatible with, those of the others. This contest is the theme of the present work.

The structure of the work has been facilitated by a chance fact of history: the forces that challenged Qassem's government developed their impetus in succession. It has therefore been possible to observe a thematic division without disturbing the chronological sequence. Some inconsistencies are apparent rather than real. Thus, for instance, the "Nationalist Interlude" of Rashīd 'Ālī's plot was mainly a response to the "Communist Challenge", already the major force by the end of 1958, and is therefore included under that heading. The same criterion applies with even greater pertinence to the Shawwāf revolt.

The most important source for this work has been the contemporary Iraqi press and radio. The former, in particular, is rewarding, not merely for the provision of facts, but for the disclosure of trends and forces in operation. Interviews have been used, but the necessity for anonymity has generally restricted their scope to details of background. The one important exception is acknowledged below.

The Arabic transliteration is that adopted by the University of London *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*. Exceptions are place names which are rendered as on Bartholomew's *Map of the Middle East*, Edinburgh, 1956, and the names of a number of well-known personalities, such as of Qassem himself, ['Abd al-Salām] Aref, Abdel Nasser and King Hussein.

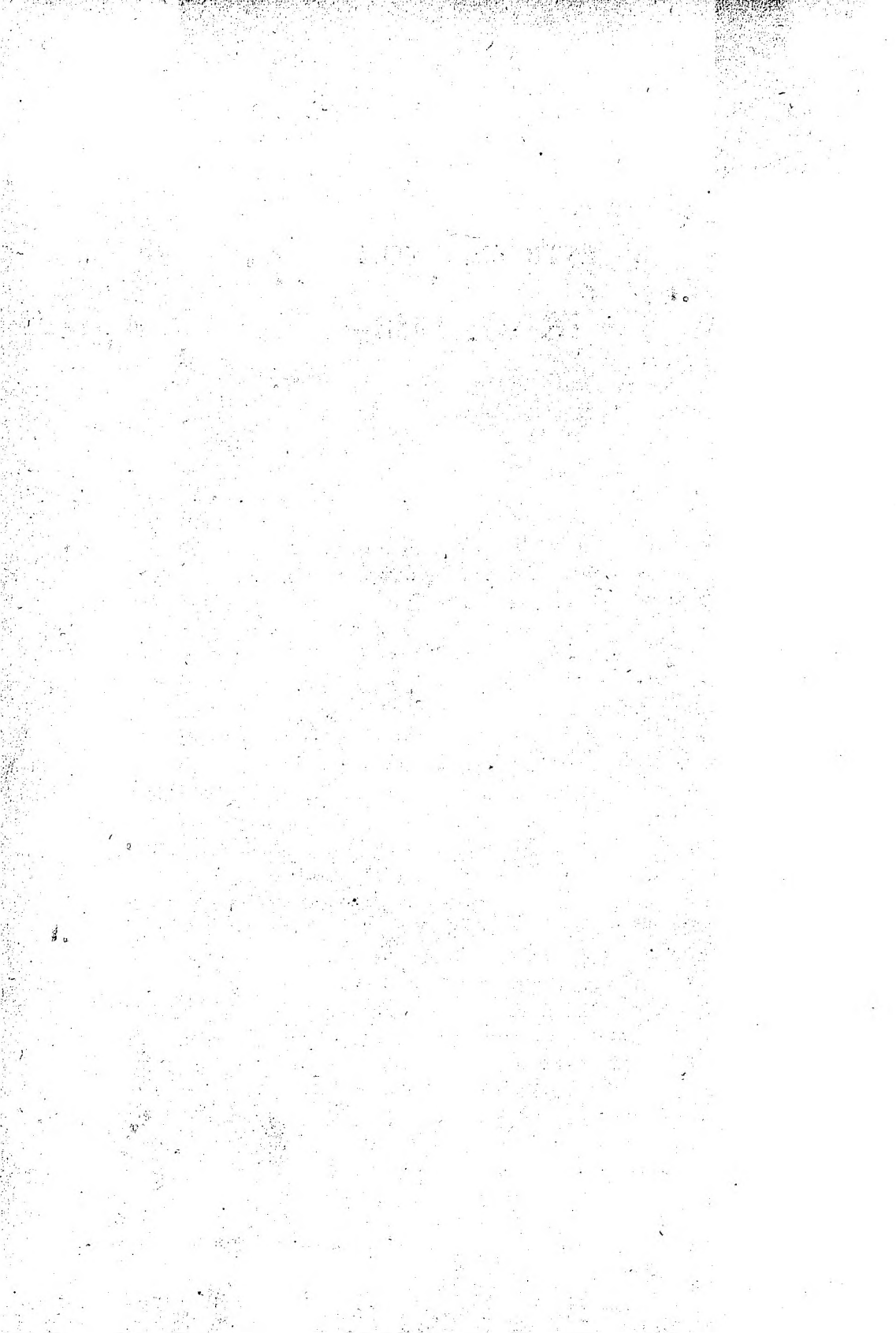
More friends and colleagues have helped me than I can mention by name. Professor Gabriel Baer of the Hebrew University (who supervised my Ph.D. thesis on which the present work has been based), Professor Elie Kedourie of the London School of Economics and Mr Yitzhak Oron, director of the Reuven Shiloah Research Center while this work was being written, have contributed criticism and advice on many points of detail as well as on the broader issues. My debt to them is great. My teacher, Professor J.L. Talmon, and Dr J.M. Landau, both of the Hebrew University, have read the manuscript and made important suggestions, as did Dr Shimon Shamir, head of the Department of the History of the Middle East and Africa, Tel Aviv University, and the present director of the Reuven Shiloah Research Center. Mr Y. Kojaman of Jerusalem has generously put at my disposal his wide knowledge of communist affairs in Iraq. Dr R. Gabbay, Dr A. Kapeliuk, Professor W. Laqueur, Mr M. Lubowski, Mr N. Rejwan and Mr H. Shaked obtained material for me which I might never have had access to otherwise. Mrs Y. E. Glikson amended the English and offered constructive comment throughout. Mr U. Davis has compiled the index, and Mrs L. Jareh typed the manuscript. To all these I am grateful indeed. *The Morning Star*, London, *The Jerusalem Post*, Jerusalem, and *Al Hamishmar*, *Bamahaneh*, *Dvar Hashavua*, *Haaretz*, *Lamerhav*, *Maariv* and *Yedioth Aharonoth*, of Tel-Aviv, have kindly permitted me to use pictures from their archives. I also thank the publishers for their help at every stage. The opinions put forward, and any errors, are my own.

Tel Aviv University,
December, 1968

Uriel Dann

INTRODUCTION

IRAQ, 1958



Ever since Iraq attained statehood in 1920, its leaders have had to contend with powerful forces of fragmentation. These have operated in the past and will continue to do so in the foreseeable future. Their cumulative effect up to the revolution of 1958 will be briefly analyzed in this Introduction.

Iraq is not a geopolitical unit. The country is divided into three sharply defined geographical areas. The valley of the Euphrates and the Tigris, river-irrigated and containing some of the most fertile agricultural soil on earth, opens towards the Indian Ocean; it is from here that British influence, ultimately leading to British occupation, penetrated. The mountains of the north and the north-east, rain-fed and poor of soil, adjoin the Armenian Knot which fans out east and west, towards Turkey and Iran, as well as southwards. The steppes of the west, arid and scarcely habitable, merge by degrees into the Mediterranean hinterland towards the north and Arabia in the south.

* * *

There is no "Iraqi nation", nor is there a tradition of cooperation to cement the various communities. This heterogeneity has had a decisive effect on the political life of the country.

The leading political element in Iraq are the Sunni Arabs who populate the river valley from the vicinity of Baghdad northwards up to the foothills and the Syrian frontier. They have held the lion's share in government as far back as the Ottoman conquest in the sixteenth century, as the rulers at Constantinople had to rely on the cooperation of their co-sectaries against the ever-present threat from Shi'i Persia. The emergence of an Iraqi state made no difference; an example of Sunni preeminence is that Sunni Arabs headed all but five of the fifty-nine Cabinets before the 1958 revolution. That this virtually ruling community is a minority group, constituting at most one-quarter of the country's population, furnishes a key to understanding the perennial difficulties which beset Iraq. The affinity of the Sunni Arabs with the bulk of the Arab world by virtue of their geographical position and cultural traditions makes them the backbone of pan-Arab nationalism in the country.

The largest community is that of the Shi'i Arabs, settled from Baghdad southwards and constituting about half the population. *Prima facie* they might have formed the nucleus for a distinct Iraqi nation; they are separated from their neighbours in Iran both through language and by centuries of political history; they form a distinctive unit by contrast with the Arabic-speaking population to the north by virtue of their sectarianism, and with the nomadic tribes to the south in their way of life. In fact, they

have played an unsettling role. They are, by Iraqi standards, backward socially and economically. Beset with a persecution complex dating from the schism of the first century of the *Hijra*, with only occasional personalities among them making an impact beyond their own community, they are *L'Irak des révoltes*¹ par excellence, and have remained in isolation from, and often in rebellion against, the state, its government, its stability, its progress.

The Kurds form about one-fifth of the population. Although they are Sunnis, religious affinity in this case has proved irrelevant when set against national feelings. Kurdish nationalism is of comparatively recent growth, though the Kurds have inhabited their present homeland for a very long time. Their Indo-European language divides them sharply from their neighbours to south and west. Their mountain seclusion has fostered their sense of independence as individuals and as a community; on the other hand it has retarded their social, economic and political progress. Although a feeling of devotion to a greater Kurdish motherland exists, and has expanded with increased urbanization, the majority still keeps faith with the tribe and its chiefs. That the Kurds are reputed to be more self-assertive, more martial and in better physical condition than the Arabic-speaking majority of Iraq, does not ease the situation from the viewpoint of Baghdad.

The Turcomans, at most one-fiftieth of the population and settled at Kirkuk and in a string of villages along the border between Arab and Kurdish territory, for long had an importance beyond their numerical strength. Their Turkish connection made them an object of hatred to the Kurds and suspicion in Baghdad; their particular geographical concentration added tension to an already difficult situation. They are conspicuous enough to invite aggression and too few numerically for effective self-defence. They need the protection of the Iraqi state, but owe it no manifest loyalty.

A host of smaller communities—Christian groups of various denominations, Jews, Yezidis, Sabaeans, Iranians, transplanted Kurdish groups like the Shi'i Faylis—add to the human spectrum. Mutually incompatible, they share their indifference to the Iraqi state as a national concept; whether parochially-minded or forming hotbeds of social discontent, they cannot be deemed an asset on the balance sheet of Iraqi citizenship.

* * *

¹ Pierre Rossi.

The foregoing briefly summarizes the ethnic and religious forces making for unrest in Iraq. The socio-economic picture is no more reassuring. The tensions created by agrarian misery now grown conscious of its condition, by the uneven disintegration of tribal links, by urbanization overtaking industrialization, by an under-employed and semi-educated intelligentsia, by a mob of would-be politicians, and by an officer élite, are not peculiar to Iraq. But in combination with the minority problem these factors play as pernicious a role in Iraq as anywhere in the Middle East. Set against the background of the singularly inept regime of the last years under Hashimite rule, they were an insurmountable obstacle to stability.

A few basic facts and data must be given to explain the importance attached to the problem of agrarian misery by the socially conscious sector of the public of the period.

Agriculture provides the livelihood of the majority of the Iraqi population. The greater part of this population are tribes which settled during the last generations of Ottoman rule on land that had been out of cultivation for five centuries or more, after its devastation by the great Mongol invasions. In the transition to an agricultural economy, the tribes retained their identities as social, economic and, to some extent, political units. Their hereditary shaykhs continued to bear responsibility as leaders of their people in an existence which derived its modicum of security from an immemorial lattice of mutual dependence. The economy was at first one of almost pure subsistence; the lands were held by the tribe without title-deeds or fixed boundaries. A subsistence economy offers little inducement to the complex, costly and possibly dangerous process of turning customary and collective land occupancy into private ownership as recognized by law in the modern state.

The Ottoman Land Code of 1858 facilitated land registration in the names of tribal chiefs. At about the same time the development of fairly reliable river communications, linking up with scheduled steamship lines from Bombay to Basra, enhanced the value of stockbreeding and agriculture as cash-producing activities. This evolution at first made slow progress, but was immensely accelerated after World War I. Opportunities for an agricultural market economy rapidly increased, while the British, in contrast with the Ottoman authorities, followed a policy of propitiating the tribal chiefs and identifying their interests with those of the new regime. New Tribal Disputes Regulations transposed the jurisdiction of the tribal chief over his followers onto the statute book of the modern state. Another feudal aspect was given permanency when the Peasants Rights and Duties Law of 1933 prohibited sharecroppers and labourers from leaving the land when in debt to the landowner, as they almost invariably were, and gave

the absorption
of tribal
structures

the landowner the right to take punitive action against the families of fugitives. New Land Settlement Laws permitted increasingly larger tracts of land to be registered virtually as the property of the shaykhs and of urban capitalists. In provinces where land registration advanced slowly, as in Amara, tribal chiefs occupied "pure state" (*mīrī şirf*) lands in huge holdings no less securely. Most important, whatever the laws and regulations issuing from Baghdad, and whatever the intentions of the legislator, the bureaucracy would, out of sloth, corruption or class interest, ultimately favour the big possessor.

While the shaykhs were thus secured by legal process in their new positions as large-scale landowners, they were alienated from their traditional functions of leadership. Moreover, they were often unsuited by upbringing and inclination to take an intelligent and sustained interest in the management of their lands, even for their own pecuniary advantage. New classes of middlemen were therefore encouraged to interpose themselves to the detriment of the cultivator. Such were the entrepreneurs who set up pumping installations and supplied machinery, and the host of under-shaykhs and "sirkals"—ostensibly managers for the owner, or performing some other rational function, but often achieving little else than battenning on the peasantry.

Consequently, by the time of the 1958 revolution, 67.1 per cent of the registered area of Iraq was in the hands of landlords holding estates of over 1,000 dunums², while only 15.7 per cent remained in the hands of peasant owners with up to 100 dunums. The burden of the agricultural economy rested on a dispossessed proletariat of sharecroppers and labourers who made up the bulk of the rural population³. This soil-bound majority vegetated in a state of virtual serfdom with no security of tenure or employment, and practically without recourse to the courts of the country of which they were supposed to be citizens. Ignorant and disease-ridden, they subsisted on a fraction of the crops they produced, and often obtained no more than a fraction of the 50 per cent that was their legal due. Although not oblivious of their misery, they were disorganized; they achieved little beyond occasional bloody riots. The income of the peasant was even further depressed by the abundance of land reserves, which put a premium on extensive cultivation rather than on improvement of yield.

² One Iraqi dunum = 2,500 sq. metres = 0.6 acres approx.

³ Rooth et al., *The Economic Development of Iraq*, Baltimore, 1952, p. 142 et seq. In Amara four owners were reputed to be in practical possession of the province (Warriner, D., *Land Reform and Development in the Middle East*, 2nd ed., London, 1962, p. 142).

The predominant position of the great landowners, in a regime widely suspect for its Western connections, exacerbated progressive opinion in Iraq from the commencement of the populist movement of the early 1930s. These twin grievances were expressed in the hostile slogans *iqṭā'* and *isti'mār*—feudalism and colonialism—and became battle cries directed at the same enemy.

Of the countries of the Middle East, Iraq has been comparatively fortunate in its opportunities for developing non-agrarian sources of livelihood for the population. Since the Middle Ages its central position between Europe and the Indies has enriched the merchants of Baghdad, Mosul and "Balsora," thus affording a living to multitudes of their economic dependants. Its oil produces capital for industrialization. Both oil and the rich agricultural potential can act as the basis for industries and services of great promise.

Progress was achieved in the forty years preceding 1958. New industries were established. The working class which formed was as advanced in concentration of employment, in class consciousness and, so far as political circumstances permitted, in organizational achievements, as any in the Arab Middle East.

But this was still wholly inadequate in the context of the country's needs. In particular, the flight from the village induced by the agrarian situation greatly exceeded the rate of industrialization. An uprooted, unassimilated human flotsam accumulated on the outskirts of every sizable town, consisting of declassed, unskilled peasants, without opportunities of finding employment beyond—at best—the most menial, badly paid and despised jobs. Housed in "sarifas"—tin shanties, hanging sacks or mud hovels—several families could be counted in one dwelling and hundreds to the acre. According to the lowest estimate, two hundred thousand of such squatters had accumulated around Baghdad alone by 1958. This fringe of human misery usually remained passive. Nevertheless, it presented a challenge to a growing sector of the public.

It is significant that the first modern institution of higher learning to be opened in Iraq was a law school, before World War I. Even today technical and agricultural colleges are inadequate and under-frequented. Graduates of law and the humanities found themselves in increasing numbers unemployed or under-employed. Cut off from or contemptuous of the traditions of their forefathers, often presenting a façade of Western culture which they had not really absorbed, ambitious, disinclined to physical exertion, harbouring a perpetual grudge against a society which did not reward their deserts, they constituted a class whose ruling passion

was for political activity in its narrowest interpretation, with a predilection for forming cliques, engaging in petty intrigues and rumour-mongering. These activities usually proved sterile and impotent, but provided a permanent element of restlessness and discontent; they acted as a stimulus for any power group to try and overthrow the existing regime.

The power group most suited to this purpose has, since the achievement of independence, been the Iraqi army; more accurately, an élite formed within the officers corps. The Iraqi army was one of the earliest institutions of the state. First organized in the early months of 1921, it antedates the Hashimite regime—a factor of greater than chronological significance. The value of its goodwill, its usefulness in providing ceremonial lustre to the regime and in keeping subversion in check, assured it high official favour and attention from the monarchy. The technical and administrative qualifications of the officers corps were, on the whole, above those of either the civil service or employees in the private sector. Their excellent service conditions, social cohesion, even the distinctiveness of their uniform, endowed them with self-assurance and pride of caste. Most important, the officers corps had experienced the taste of four-and-a-half years of political power, from Bakr Šidqī's coup in the autumn of 1936 till the early summer of 1941, when Iraq was virtually ruled by changing cliques inside the army. That time had passed, but the memory remained to whet the appetite.

A climate of violence is part of the political scene in Iraq. Communal problems and the conditions of poverty and under-development, go a long way towards explaining its presence, without providing a full answer. It is an undercurrent which pervades the vast substrata of the people outside the sphere of power politics. Hundreds of thousands of souls can easily be mobilized on the flimsiest pretext. They constitute a permanently restive element, ready to break into riots which more than once in recent years have resulted in mass butchery. This climate of violence has spurred on the groups contending for power, and in our generation it has been the cause of more political and juridical assassinations than have taken place in any other Arab country in a comparable state of social advancement.

* * *

Nor is Iraq a political entity with a tradition of independence. The present frontiers were fixed within living memory—largely by foreign powers to suit alien interests.

During most of the Ottoman period, government was a fiction over vast tracts of what is today Iraq. The frontier with Persia fluctuated wildly. There

was no regional or functional administrative infrastructure, as the term is now understood. The writ of the Sultan's governors rarely extended beyond their capitals, or wherever their soldiery reached on occasional forays. A host of tribal confederacies and hereditary "princdoms" were independent in all but name, although their status rested on shifting opportunities and on the qualities of their chiefs rather than on any formal recognition by the suzerain power. The last three generations of Ottoman rule saw some change. With the penetration of European ideas on government, and under the impact of European aggression, the Sultans and their advisers became eager to turn their lordship over the outlying provinces into administrative reality. The technological advances of the time played into their hands. By 1914 the three *vilayets* of Basra, Baghdad and Mosul, roughly delimited, covered a territory resembling that of modern Iraq, with the *vali* of Baghdad enjoining an undefined precedence over his colleagues. The countryside was still unruly; the shaykhs and aghas remained the traditional enemies of constituted authority, always unreliable and often rebellious; but the territorial autonomies had disappeared. The Persian frontier had been demarcated at last by a commission dominated by its British and Russian members.

The modicum of effective centralism achieved did not serve any incipient sense of "Iraqism". Obviously, its aim had been very different. Nor did the resentment inevitably engendered among the native population work in this direction; as far as it became articulate it served either local ambitions or nationalist loyalties of wider scope—Arab and, to a lesser extent, Kurdish and even Jewish.

The twelve years of British mandatory rule under a Hashimite king—himself a foreigner to Iraq—did little to foster loyalty to an Iraqi nation. Although the British position rested on conquest, it was not so universally detested from the outset as Arab historiography asserts, and as modern notions conditioned to "anti-imperialism" would lead our generation to assume. But it was undoubtedly unpopular with both the Muslim-Arab sectors: with the Shi'is who resented all foreign and modernist intrusion, let alone that of a Christian power; with the Sunnis who, as the privileged order of old, saw themselves cheated of whatever fruits of office went to the British and their protégés—Assyrians, Jews, Indians. Moreover, it was part of the Sunni intelligentsia which harboured pan-Arab sympathies and nurtured a grievance against the British on this account. Plainly, therefore, the bond uniting Arab Shi'is and Sunnis in anti-British sentiment was of a negative kind, and unhelpful in building a nation.

The twenty-six years of formal independence which preceded the 1958 revolution hardly worked a change. The Rashid 'Ālī interlude of 1941 gave

rise to another aggravating factor: for a few brief weeks Iraq had, in nationalist eyes, been truly emancipated from British domination. The return of the old order stamped the Hashimites and their supporters forever as British clients—the point had been made before, but never so plausibly and so uncompromisingly as it was to appear henceforth. The hanging of five prominent nationalists—four of them senior army officers—in the wake of the affair, at the reputed insistence of the regent ‘Abdul Ilāh himself, added to the anti-Hashimite cause the motive of blood revenge.

* * *

The crucial period preceding the revolution was the four years before 1958 when Nuri al-Sa‘id, though not continuously in office, influenced the political life of his country to an unprecedented degree. He left a *damnosa hereditas* which hampered his supplanters in pursuing policies of their own choice.

What was the nature of this handicap?

Nuri's regime was authoritarian; political activities were suppressed. Nuri relied on the support of the army and on the efficacy of "security measures" while under-estimating civil discontent. It was a period of increased economic activity, thanks to a newly released flood of oil royalties, but little progress was achieved in the sphere of social reform. Foreign policy was British-orientated and guided by a fear of Soviet encroachment. Relations with Egypt, where Abdel Nasser acted as the standard-bearer of the new Arab nationalism, were strained, but of an apologetic rather than aggressive nature on the Iraqi side. The bureaucracy was no more corrupt than previously, but awareness of its corruption was more acute.

Nuri's authoritarian tendencies have been variously attributed to natural temperament, to his Ottoman education and military training during early manhood, to his experiences in Iraqi politics in the 1920s before he had reached the peak of his career, or to his conviction that his image of an orderly, prosperous, influential and pro-Western Iraq could only become a reality under a strong man. By mid-1954, after he returned to power following a period of particular unrest, these considerations had set into something like a fixed principle. He made it a condition of his return that he was to deal with "faction" in his own way.

The palace and the old guard found this condition the easier to accept since a genuine opposition of serious dimensions had entered parliament in June 1954, as a result of the "least . . . rigidly controlled" general elections the country had yet experienced⁴. A new chamber was returned

⁴ Khadduri, M., *Independent Iraq, 1932-1958*. London, 1960, p. 306.

in "the most rigidly controlled elections ever," according to the same authority. Freedom of expression by the press, the politicians, the students, and the politically minded citizen in general, was kept in check by measures of unprecedented strictness. A shifting population of communists, liberal socialists, Nasserites, Kurdish nationalists, general malcontents, and other suspects swelled the prisons and detention camps, or was kept under surveillance away from home. The great majority of all arrests that took place was of communists, but the risk attended all sectors.

On the other hand, Nuri's Iraq during these years cannot be termed a military regime. His closest helpmates were all civilians. The highest appointments in the army were held by executives wielding no influence outside the professional sphere; in this respect the regime differed strikingly from that of Rashīd 'Ālī in 1941 and the Cabinets which had preceded him. However, the army was indubitably looked upon as the main prop in time of trouble. It was carefully groomed for its role. Terms of service for officers, always very favourable, were further improved in 1955 by new service and pension regulations. The political proclivities of individual officers were kept under close observation, and a continuous process of small-scale purges of unsafe officers—communists and others—was in being. Nevertheless, Nuri's faith in the army's loyalty was surprisingly sanguine. The grounds on which this optimism was based are not entirely clear, unless he was unable to envisage that the creature could rise against its creator. His optimism was shared by the Chief of the General Staff, Lt.-Gen. Rafīq 'Ārif, whose main concern in this respect seems to have been to prevent the Criminal Investigation Department from interfering in army affairs. The CID was a complex organization with a long tradition of service. Its head, Bahjat al-'Aṭiyya, was subordinate to Sa'id Qazzāz, the Minister of the Interior, one of Nuri's most trusted and dependable collaborators.

Nuri's last years of power coincided with the period when Iraq's oil income first produced a budget surplus that could be allocated to major development projects. There is a fair consensus of opinion that the economic policy adopted in consequence, while it sponsored projects of vision and importance, and while its administration was reasonably sound and honest, neglected the immediate need to relieve social misery. Another weakness of development policy during those years was that it was insufficiently publicized. The presence on the Development Board of one British and one American member also cannot have improved its image as an Iraqi achievement, in the prevailing atmosphere.

There is little doubt that Nuri, who has been credibly described as kindly and compassionate towards individuals, had little interest in "social

progress"; there is no doubt that the Iraqi public at large failed to credit him with any. His attachments lay with the tribal grandees, and he explicitly opposed any agrarian reform aimed at reducing the size of land holdings. Shortly after the revolution, Ḥusayn Jamīl, a sophisticated and not unfair Iraqi observer, defined its causes in purely socio-economic terms as the release of forces repressed by an egoistic ruling class which had paid no attention to such social and economic changes as industrial development and the growth of a working class. Further causes he listed were the progressive settlement of nomads and the consequent waning of their influence; the replacement of feudalism by capitalism; the growth of articulate peasant movements; the development of banking; the spread of education; the possibilities offered by the country's wealth in oil, land and water resources⁵.

Most outside observers, while admitting that Nuri's constitutional and social ideas were old-fashioned and harmful to his standing, still attribute prime responsibility for his unpopularity to his foreign orientation. On the whole, his sympathies were consistently pro-British. Weighty logical reasons could be adduced in favour of Nuri's policy: it could be argued that Iraq was in need of a protector among the Great Powers. Britain had given Iraq proof of good faith in the past. There were the requirements of oil policy. Even Britain's manifest weariness of supporting an empire was a reason why she would exact a lesser price for her friendship than other powers. Yet it seems that irrational factors also played their part with Nuri: the ineradicable impressions formed in youth; habit; and perhaps the penchant of an Ottoman pasha for "the English way of life."

By the 1950s, however, this attachment was dangerously opposed to the spirit of the times. There was the upsurge of Arab nationalism and its preoccupation with prestige values. There was Britain's status as the ex-mandatory "colonial" power, her retention of certain diplomatic and political privileges, and the suspicion that Iraq was being cheated by the British-managed oil companies of her chief and irreplaceable source of wealth. There was also the belief, amounting to obsession, that the British ambassador was the power behind the palace; and there was the anglicized mode of life of the royal house. The sting of past humiliations was felt, even if unintentionally inflicted. The significance of the 1941 Rashīd 'Ālī episode has been mentioned. The decline of British power, and the will to exert it, reacted on the prestige of her chief supporter in Iraq. In addition, there was the "Palestine disaster"; the fumbblings of Western diplomacy still unadjusted to the changing scene;

⁵ Jamīl, Ḥusayn, *al-'Irāq al-jadīd*, Beirut, 1958, pp. 42-45.

the attractive dividends offered by Positive Neutralism in the international arena; the soaring prestige of the Soviet Union, accompanied by offers of counsel and aid, as yet unsoured by too close acquaintance.

Even on its intrinsic merits, the Baghdad Pact—negotiated by Nuri in 1955 and tying Iraq to the West in a military alliance plainly directed against the Soviet Union—was bound to antagonize public opinion. Invasion from Russia lay outside the national experience⁶. The line-up against the Soviet Union was as offensive to the Left-wing factions as the further commitment to Britain was to the Right. It had never been popularly assumed that Iraq shared a common destiny with Turkey or Iran, despite the 1937 Saadabad Treaty with these countries. The Kurds in particular were nervously suspicious lest any agreement between Iraq and their historic oppressors, Turkey and Iran, should turn into a conspiracy against national survival. Again, the official publicity given to the considerations for entering into the Baghdad Pact was ineptly handled.

In the conflict between Abdel Nasser and Nuri al-Sa'īd the role of the latter was essentially passive, though it is possible to argue that Iraq had offered provocations to Abdel Nasser. At its basis lay the historical rivalry between Cairo and Baghdad, which boiled up whenever a new claim to Arab leadership arose. From 1954 onwards, a chain of circumstances branded Nuri as the archtraitor to the true Arabism and its new-found hero.

While Egypt struggled to assert her independence of the West in a mounting spirit of aggressiveness, Iraq was entering upon a new Western military connection. Abdel Nasser's prominent role at the Bandoeng conference of 1955, and the first Soviet-Egyptian arms deal in that year, greatly boosted his prestige. The Iraqi-Egyptian rivalry in Syria caused further deterioration of the relations between the two governments. Nuri's sincerity in standing by Egypt in her hour of peril in the 1956 Suez crisis was suspect. Finally, the birth of the United Arab Republic in 1958 was Abdel Nasser's greatest triumph yet, and the exuberance of success created its own momentum. Throughout, there was a lingering fear in Cairo that Nuri, the old fox, might yet somehow outwit his less-experienced rival. Nuri's response to the attacks of the ferocious propaganda led by Cairo Radio was inadequate. He rationalized, pleaded, complained. But a strain of defeatism runs through his defence which cannot only be explained by a lack of charismatic qualities.

⁶ Although in 1915 tsarist troops had penetrated to Khanaqin on the Persian frontier.

Neither of the two unions formed in the Arab world at the beginning of 1958 was of benefit to the Iraqi monarchy. The formation of the UAR too obviously enhanced the prestige of Abdel Nasser to augur well for the Iraqi regime. Less predictable was the effect on Iraqi opinion of the Arab Federation of Iraq and Jordan, engineered by Nuri less than a month later. The truth of the adage that one man's meat is another man's poison was displayed to the full. The step was unpopular in Iraq, although the press was not permitted to say so. Fear that Iraq would have to assume responsibility for part of the chronic Jordanian financial deficits may have been one reason, but another factor was decisive. The union of Egypt and Syria had been accepted as a genuine advance towards the realization of Arab nationalism. The federation of Iraq and Jordan, on the other hand, was at best a family compact between an unloved and alien royal house and its needy relations abroad; at worst it was an imperialist manoeuvre masquerading as virtue. When, on the second day of its life, Qassem's republican government affirmed that the federation had not been "a true union," it was repeating not merely what had been trumpeted for five months from Cairo, but what also was a genuine expression of public opinion in Iraq. It proved a remarkable vindication of the statecraft of Abdel Nasser over that of Nuri.

* * *

It was only to be expected that the party system would be an early development in Iraqi politics, although many so-called parties represented little else than an expression of the ambition and jealousies of their leaders. However, in the 1930's, in Iraq, as in other of the more Westernized Arab countries, a new type of political party began to take shape, basically patterned along Western lines. By 1958, four or five main parties could be counted with a genuine desire to take issue with the problems of the country.

A politician of Nuri's experience cannot have expected the opposition parties to evaporate because he had declared them illegal. However, his contempt for party politics was manifest. Their underground existence—except for that of the communists—hardly seems to have troubled him, so long as he was rid of what he considered their interference with the country's progress. This combination of intolerance of open opposition and near-toleration of opposition outside the law, when added to the grievances stemming from his policy, encouraged his enemies inside Iraq to form a coalition. The illegality of their position could assist them to ignore the divisions among themselves, and would serve to boost their

reputation for integrity and patriotism. At the same time, it relieved them of the restraint or responsibility they might have shown as a legal opposition. Nuri's indifference made their activity reasonably safe and their survival reasonably certain.

Thus, early in 1957 the existence of a United National Front (UNF) was brought to the notice of the public by means of whispered propaganda and clandestine distribution of leaflets⁷. It linked together four opposition parties: the National Democratic Party (NDP), the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP), the Istiqlāl Party, and the Ba'th Party. If the United Democratic Party of Iraqi Kurdistan (UDPK)—which formally joined the UNF after the 1958 revolution—is also included, the front represented the five parties that helped to shape Qassem's Iraq.

The UNF parties had in common yet another characteristic: they were all pitifully small. None of them had a membership, or active following, exceeding a very few thousands among an adult male population of nearly two million nominal voters. In underground conditions this did not count as a substantial drawback. When the parties were to reappear in the open, claiming to play a constructive role in the country's destiny, the handicap was serious indeed.

The National Democratic Party represented liberal constitutionalism, with a socialist tinge to its economic policy and a Left shading into the communist camp. It fully shared in the resentment of British influence, which it regarded as debasing and retrogressive. Founded in 1946, the NDP was the direct successor of the Ahālī group of the early 1930s, which had started as a radical reform movement of angry young men. In 1936, an attempted alliance with Bakr Šidqī left the party with a permanent anti-militarist bias. The leading members of the NDP were educated men, with a high reputation for integrity and seriousness. The party chairman, and its undisputed leader, the advocate Kāmil al-Chaderchi, was widely considered the ideal prime minister to head a reformed Iraq. Chaderchi's deputy was the industrialist Muḥammad Ḥadīd, a graduate of the London School of Economics. The NDP could count on the sympathy of moderate and progressive urban opinion throughout the country; but this was a woefully restricted sector. NDP organization at lower levels, and outside Baghdad, was rudimentary, although branches existed at most provincial capitals. When the parties were declared illegal, the NDP did not maintain a clandestine movement, in contrast to the ICP and the Ba'th. Activity of sorts continued at the highest level on a semi-private basis, in the form

⁷ Not to be confused with the National Front of 1954, a coalition of opposition parties restricted to the purpose of fighting the general elections. --

Banned +
unofficial

of home circles and small discussion groups. That the party had not so far been conspicuous for its boldness or its ability to grasp the main chance was consistent with its other characteristics.

✓ The Iraqi Communist Party was constituted in 1934. It received an important infusion of Ahālī members in the late 1930s; among its prominent recruits at the time were the brothers 'Abd al-Qādir and Yūsuf Ismā'il al-Bustānī. In the 1940s and early fifties the communists underwent a phase of atomization into rival groupings. In 1956, however, just before the formation of the UNF, reunification had been achieved under the party secretary Ḥusayn al-Raḍī, alias Salām 'Ādil. As might be expected, the ICP had a special attraction for the smaller minorities, although this aspect need not be exaggerated. Its organization—fundamentally that of any communist party—was as well developed as the circumstances permitted. From a centralized leadership, a network of committees spread down and around at least to the smallest *nāhiya*, or subdistrict (see Appendix).

The ICP had always been illegal, though occasionally, before Nuri's return to power in 1954, some front organizations had been able to work openly. The party had its martyrs at the hand of the government; chief among them was Fahd—Yūsuf Salmān Yūsuf—its first secretary. By 1958, hundreds of its members had been imprisoned for many years, in general all those on whom the authorities could lay hands. The government maintained an unbroken anti-communist propaganda campaign: the official attitude towards the communists also differed in this respect from that demonstrated to the other opposition parties. However, efforts in this direction were bound to fail. In the late 1950s, the number of declared communists in Iraq was too small to be considered a danger by public opinion; their chances of office too remote to stir up rivalry. Social reform was in the air and champions of the old order kept silent or were on the defensive, so that communism ceased to be regarded as the bogey it had been in the thirties. On the other hand, the apolitical multitude, however slight their influence, were unlikely to be roused by propaganda slogans against the one party which had not only shown a sustained interest in their welfare but had endeavoured to work among them; and the steadfastness which many communists showed under persecution impressed the public in their favour.

✓ The Istiqlāl party also had its origins in the 1930s. It developed from the Muthannā Club, which represented a fervid nationalism expressed in xenophobia rather than constructive cooperation for pan-Arab unity. It was not materially interested in social questions. During the political thaw of 1945–46, the club formed itself into the Istiqlāl—Independence—Party, its name proclaiming its preoccupation with the elimination of British

influences. Although this issue was popular with the majority of the politically conscious public, the party did not establish a grass-roots organization. It was largely identified with its three leaders, each of whom were politicians with a national reputation: Muḥammad Maḥdī Kubba, Fā'iq al-Sāmarrā'ī, and Ṣiddīq Shanshal—the chairman, vice-chairman and secretary of the party respectively. During the last years of the monarchy, the twin pulls of pan-Arab nationalism and social consciousness cost the Istiqlāl part of its popular allegiance, probably to the advantage of the Ba'th and the NDP. But its name retained a powerful appeal.

The Ba'th Party was organized in Iraq in about 1954. It was an offspring of the Syrian parent party, which ignored the "artificial frontiers" created by "imperialism," so far as conditions permitted. The Ba'th leadership in Baghdad was a "regional command," subordinate to the "national command" in Damascus. It closely followed the precepts of revolutionary nationalism and socialism propounded by its Syrian founding fathers, with nationalism rating as a decided first. Organized on the cell system, like that of the communists, the Iraqi Ba'th found its supporters in the Sunni-Arab area along the Upper Euphrates. In Baghdad it was particularly strong in the A'zamiyya quarter. Organized membership of the Ba'th was small, even by Iraqi standards. For this, its underground existence must be held partly responsible, as well as its comparatively recent formation in Iraq and its appeal—generally speaking—to a minority group. The regional secretary, the young engineer Fu'ād al-Rikābī, was dismissed from the Ministry of Development for his nationalist views. Otherwise it does not appear that the Ba'th was subjected to active oppression: the number of party detainees was minute.

The United Democratic Party of Iraqi Kurdistan also was constituted under this name in 1954, after a number of earlier Kurdish nationalist parties and societies had disintegrated. There were sister parties in Iran and Syria, but the Iraqi UDKP was independent—unlike the Ba'th—and concerned itself almost exclusively with the problems of the Kurdish minority in the country. The *part*, as it was popularly called, represented Kurdish nationalism to the detribalized Kurds, which meant, in practice, the educated youth of the larger Kurdish towns, in particular Sulaimaniya, the centre of Kurdish national consciousness in Iraq since before World War I. The UDKP was also strong among the Kurds of the mixed cities, Baghdad, Mosul, and Kirkuk, and Basra where there was a large contingent of Kurdish porters and stevedores. It professed to be Marxist-Leninist in outlook and was in close contact with the ICP, though there was also a counter-current of rivalry and competitive propaganda. UDKP statements of "Kurdish rights" never included demands for secession and

independence. After World War II, the predecessors of the UDPK had cooperated with the Barzani-led tribes in uprisings against Baghdad. They were also associated with the ill-starred Kurdish Republic of Mehabad in 1946, across the Iranian frontier. The connection still held; the UDPK chairman, Mullā Muṣṭafā Barzani, had been a general in the Mehabad army. The party secretary was the Sulaimaniya lawyer Ibrāhīm Aḥmad.

The government used greater energy in suppressing the UDPK than it showed in dealing with the NDP or the Istiqlāl. At the time of the revolution, Ibrāhīm Aḥmad was living in Kirkuk under police surveillance. No political newspaper in Kurdish was permitted to appear. Evidently the regime regarded the UDPK and its sympathizers as a menace to peace and order rather than as an opposition party in the narrower sense. This attitude was all the more understandable since the party had never put up candidates for parliament and was not a member of the UNF. All the same, it furnishes another instance of the old regime's flair for antagonizing trends representative of the times, beyond strict political necessity. Nuri was not "anti-Kurd." He had no wish to arabize the Kurds—perhaps less so than any of his successors. In view of his difficulties with Abdel Nasser, there should have been every inducement for him to foster an Iraqi-Kurdish rapprochement.

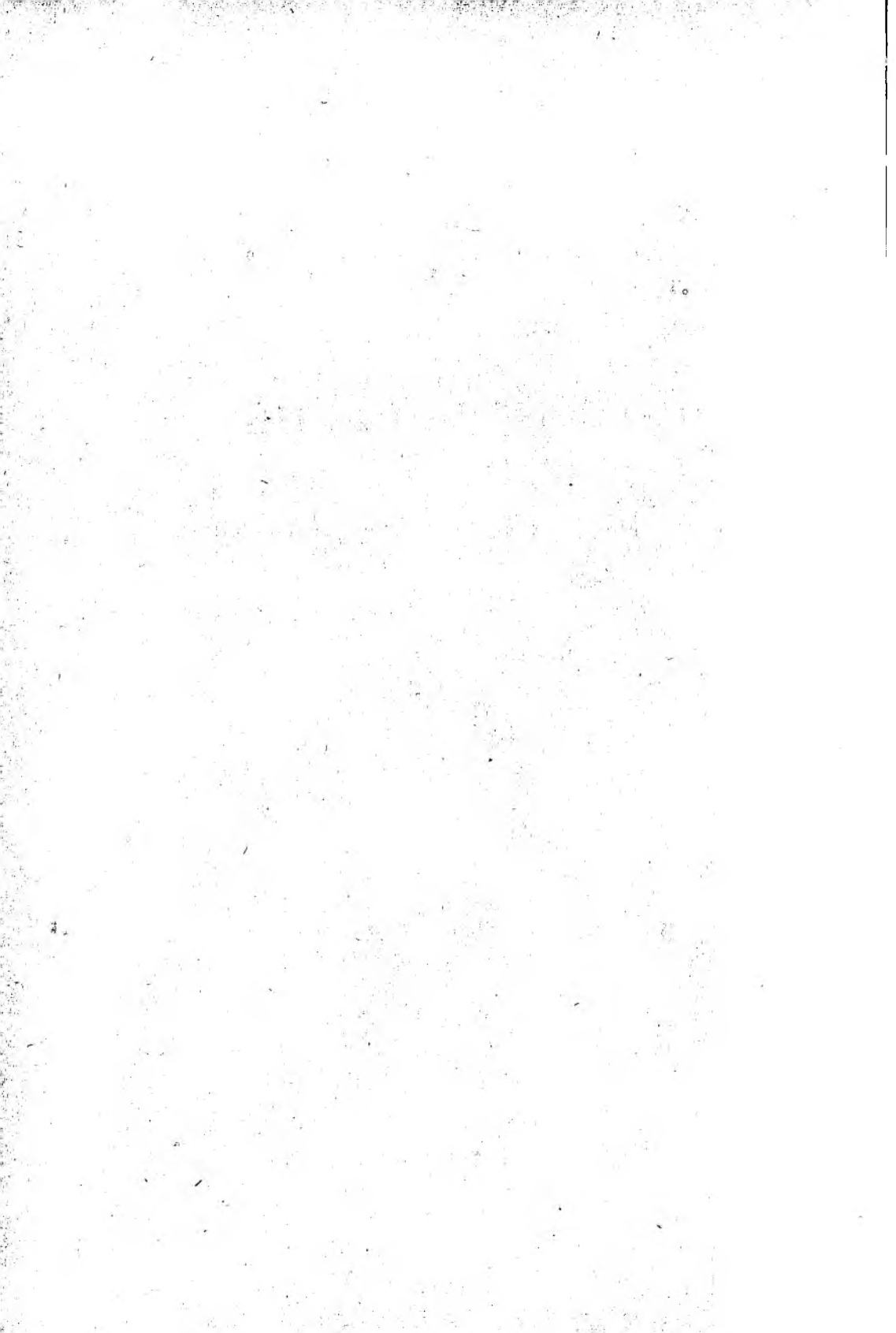
Contacts between the UNF partners were conducted through a "Supreme National Committee" and a "Supreme Executive." Their cooperation in practice can only be instanced over minor matters.

* * *

Since its demise, Nuri's Iraq has been called *al-'ahd al-fāsid*, the Corrupt Regime, a sobriquet that has stuck. The charge goes to the roots of the national existence. The deposed rulers had defaulted over what their accusers believed were the fundamental duties of the government of Iraq, and a new regime would have to make good. These great expectations, harboured by so many and divergent forces, provided the yardstick by which the success of Qassem's government was to be measured.

PART ONE

**THE FOUNDING OF THE
REPUBLIC AND THE
NATIONALIST CHALLENGE**



CHAPTER 1 THE ANTECEDENTS OF THE COUP

Many details bearing on the conspiracy that culminated in the revolution of July 14, 1958, are still unknown. However, enough has been said and written by the central figures in the plot and their confidants to enable us to reconstruct a reasonably complete picture.

On examination, two significant features can clearly be distinguished: The rising was military in conception, planning, organization and execution; the military character of the conspiracy was preserved, though contacts had been made with certain civilian circles opposing the monarchy, and a minimum number of politicians was informed of the date of the coup a day or two in advance.

Secondly, a "central committee of Free Officers" had existed before the coup, but this organization cannot be compared to the closely knit junta led by Gamal Abdel Nasser in the bid for power in Egypt in 1952. Even in its preparatory stages, the revolution in Iraq had become a one-man job, effected by Qassem with Col. 'Abd al-Salām Aref acting as his trusted personal aide. At the same time Qassem's leadership was by no means accepted without reservation by the community of conspirators as that of Abdel Nasser had been accepted in his own circle.

* * *

A "Free Officers movement" had remained in existence in Iraq at least from 1952, after the coup in Egypt familiarized the army in Iraq, as elsewhere, with the idea that a "corrupt regime" could be eliminated with comparative ease and tremendous popular applause. In Egypt, however, the movement was able to penetrate the ranks of the politically inexperienced and unsophisticated officers corps largely by dint of one leader's personality, drive and genius for acquiring loyalties. But in Iraq several groups came into being independently, and at about the same time, forming around a particular army unit or garrison and engendered in the atmosphere of general *malaise* by the Iraqi Officers' inclination for, and experience in, conspiratorial activity. Common bonds were forged by the ever-

present threat of disclosure and disgrace, and the necessity of making contact with opposition politicians interested in mobilizing army action. Influenced by general developments in the region, and probably gaining in political maturity, these groups gradually combined into at first three, then two, then finally a single Free Officers Movement.

Two groups were prominent at the later stages of crystallization.

One had apparently originated from a cell founded by Lt.-Col. Ṣāliḥ ‘Abd al-Majīd al-Sāmarrā’ī, the Iraqi military attaché in Amman shortly after the Egyptian revolution. An early member was Rif‘at al-Ḥājj Sirrī, an officer of the Engineers Corps, soon afterwards made a colonel; two other members were Nāzīm al-Ṭabaqchalī and ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Shawwāf, who held the ranks of brigadier and colonel respectively at the time of the 1958 revolution. At the end of 1954 this cell was joined by another founded by the then Col. ‘Abd al Karīm Qassem, whose closest collaborator at the time was Col. Ismā‘īl ‘Ārif.

Somewhat later, the group was joined by Col. ‘Abd al-Salām Aref, an infantry officer serving under Qassem; he was coopted on the pressing recommendation of his commanding officer.

The other major group was formed at the beginning of 1956 under the leadership of Brigadiers Muḥī al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd and Nājī Ṭālib. Other members were Col. Muḥsin Ḥusayn al-Ḥabīb, Col. Rajab ‘Abd al-Majīd, Maj. Muḥammad Sab’, Lt.-Col. ‘Abd al-Karīm Farḥān, Col. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb Amīn and Lt.-Col. Waṣfī Ṭāhir.

The two groups evidently joined forces at the time of the “triple aggression” by Britain, France and Israel in October-November 1956. Qassem, by then a brigadier in command of the Nineteenth Brigade, was elected to preside over the central committee of Free Officers which led the united movement. According to a credible source the original members of the committee were, in addition to Qassem—Nājī Ṭālib, ‘Abd al-Wahhāb Amīn, Muḥī al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd, Aref, ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Shawwāf, ‘Abd al-Karīm Farḥān, Rajab ‘Abd al-Majīd, Rif‘at al-Ḥājj Sirrī, Col. Ṭāhir Yaḥyā, Waṣfī Ṭāhir, and Muḥammad Sab’¹.

During the year-and-a-half or so that remained before the revolution the Free Officers planted their informants and go-betweens in most units and depots of the army. The number of officers who knowingly associated themselves with a centrally guided conspiracy for the elimination of the regime is given as about 150 ². The last independent cell to be absorbed

¹ *Majzarat al-Riḥāb*, Beirut, 1960, p. 42.

² *ibid.*

into the unified organization, in April 1958, was apparently a group of Mosul officers led by Capt. 'Abd al-Jawād Ḥamid.

It is reported that Qassem acquainted Brig. Aḥmad Ṣāliḥ al-'Abdī, artillery commander of the Third Division and second in importance during Qassem's regime, with the existence of the movement only a few days before the coup³.

A study of the Free Officers' social background does not help to shed much light on the character of the movement. The officers belonged to the same classes as their non-aligned equals in rank; the majority were from middle-class, or even lower middle-class, urban families in the professions or trade. Well-known names, such as the Rāwī, Ṭabaqchali and Shawwāf families, were also represented. At least one Free Officer was related to companions of King Fayṣal from his Syrian days—Maj. Khālīd Makī al-Hāshimī, a nephew of two former generals and prime ministers, Yāsīn and Ṭaha al-Hāshimī. The lower middle-class element may have been stronger among the Free Officers than among their equivalents in rank in the army in general, but the difference was not striking.

* * *

Qassem himself was near the lower end of the social scale of the Free Officer membership. He was born in Mahdiyya, a poor quarter of Baghdad on the left side of the river, on December 21, 1914, the youngest of the three sons of Qāṣim bin Muḥammad bin Bakr.

According to official data published while he held office, Qassem's parents were both of pure Arab descent. His father's family derived from a Qaḥṭāniyya (southern Arab) clan and his mother's from a clan of 'Adnāniyya (northern Arab) origin. Hostile biographers have denied his Arab blood, alleging that his father was a Turcoman and his mother a Kurd. According to the most reliable evidence, Qassem's father was a Sunni Arab while his mother's parents were Faylīs—Shi'i Kurds who had migrated to Baghdad in large numbers from territory beyond the Iranian border.

Qassem has described his father as a joiner⁴; according to other sources he was a small grain-and-sheep dealer, mostly employed on occasional commissions. There is no doubt that the family subsisted barely above the poverty line.

When Qassem was six the family moved to the small town of Suwayra,

³ Vernier, *L'Irak d'aujourd'hui*, Paris, 1963, p. 176.

⁴ E. Saab, in *Monde*, Feb. 5, 1963.

on the Tigris some 50 miles below Baghdad; they returned to the capital in 1926. Qassem was evidently a promising pupil; when he finished elementary school he entered secondary school on a government scholarship. After his graduation in 1931 he taught at a Baghdad elementary school for about a year. In 1932, when the newly sovereign Kingdom of Iraq extended its recruiting of officer material to social strata hitherto neglected, the young teacher was accepted, with many of his colleagues, into Military College⁵. He graduated in 1934 as a second lieutenant and was a brigadier by 1955. Qassem held the usual variety of command and staff appointments, in 1941 graduating from the Iraqi Staff College with Grade A, and in 1950 passing a senior officers' course in Britain. During this time he had seen action. He took part in the suppression of the tribal disturbances in the Middle Euphrates region in 1935, and in Kurdistan ten years later. He also participated in the one-month war against Britain in May 1941, but did not come under fire. Qassem served throughout the Iraqi action in Palestine, following Britain's termination of the mandate—from May 1948 to June 1949. In the latter part of the campaign he commanded a battalion of the First Brigade, which held the Kafr Qasim sector south of Qalqilye, 15 miles east of Tel Aviv. In 1956-57, in the wake of Israel's Sinai campaign against Egypt, he was stationed with his brigade at Mafraq in the north of Jordan.

Long before the 1958 revolution acquaintances described Qassem as jumpy, moody and unpredictable, but capable of exercising much personal charm. He left Kafr Qasim with the reputation of a disciplinarian; irascible, painstaking and honest. There are indications that the formative year of his life was during the short-lived Bakr Şidqî regime, in 1936-37, when Maj. Muḥammad 'Alî Jawād, Şidqî's close collaborator and a relation of Qassem's mother, apparently promoted his young cousin's interests. Qassem later counted the Şidqî episode as ranking among the national struggles of the Iraqi people prior to 1958, and hinted that his own plans to liberate his country originated from about that time.

Qassem's parents died before the revolution. He never married.

* * *

The reasons for Qassem's rise to ultimate control of the Free Officers movement are complex.

⁵ The parallel with Abdel Nasser is almost perfect. Abdel Nasser also, after beginning a civilian career, was admitted to Military College when the Egyptian government liberalized entrance conditions at a new stage in the country's advance towards independence.

It was evidently never remotely envisaged by his colleagues that he would assume the sole leadership. But his elevation to the position of master planner and executive-in-chief was indisputably a decision of the central committee; it can in part be attributed to Qassem's single-mindedness and shrewdness, and his ability to dissemble. Qassem always refused to commit himself to a definite policy beyond his support of national and progressive principles in general. On the other hand, too many of the Free Officers were known to hold mutually incompatible views on the post-revolutionary programme. It was also Qassem's good fortune to command a trained infantry brigade group, the fighting formation par excellence according to British military theory accepted by the Iraqi army. His brigade was stationed at a convenient distance from the capital while other senior officers—Brigadiers Ṭabaqchalī and Ṭālib for instance—were at critical moments either serving in the far north or south or holding staff appointments without disposal over troops. Qassem also reaped the benefit of the vigilance of Nuri al-Sa'īd's own security service who eliminated a number of heavy-weight rivals for him, among them Rif'at Sirrī and Ṭāhir Yahyā. His enemies later hinted that he had assisted in this fortunate coincidence by acting as an informant⁶. Finally, by what must be considered the ultimate stroke of good luck, Qassem ranked high in the Prime Minister's affections. "Kurayyim" was considered incapable of treachery although Nuri was warned at least once, and probably more than once, that the lanky officer with his shy, boyish smile was intriguing against him. But Nuri, normally not over-trustful, accepted Qassem's denials at face value. Qassem's election to the key position in the movement further had the approval of Maj.-Gen. Najib al-Rubay'ī, Qassem's commander, the only officer of general rank who had links with the Free Officers although he does not seem to have been active on their behalf. Even after Qassem's elevation, however, and before the revolution, gossip existed to the effect that Qassem was unbalanced. Aref himself is credited with utterances dating from that time which denote anything but respect for his chief. The evidence given by Ṭabaqchalī during his trial before Mahdawī in 1959 suggests a cool disregard for Qassem which was clearly of long standing. And Nāji Ṭālib, for one, never seriously ceased to regard himself as an alternative candidate for the leadership.

In 1957 the Free Officers lost their high-placed well-wisher Rubay'ī. He incurred the suspicion of Nuri and was despatched into honourable exile as ambassador at Jedda. Qassem who escorted Rubay'ī to the

⁶ Fā'iq al-Sāmarrā'ī, letter of resignation, *Ahrām*, March 28, 1959.

aircraft promised that he would return as president of the Iraqi Republic.

The central committee continued to convene under Qassem's chairmanship. Apart from pledging themselves to overthrow the regime, and to keep faith and secrecy, its members subscribed to a "covenant" of major importance. It was agreed that after the seizure of power a Council of Revolutionary Command should be formed from within the Free Officers' central committee. The exact relationship of the council, whose members were not to act as ministers, to the conventional administration was not defined; but it is clear that the council was envisaged as the recognized policy-maker. We have it on the authority of Nājī Ṭālib that this arrangement was already believed to be in force on the day of the revolution⁷.

* * *

What was the attitude of the Free Officers towards future relations between liberated Iraq and the United Arab Republic? Among the many reported opinions two conflicting assertions must be considered. One claims that the Free Officers "unanimously" agreed to effect unity (*waḥda*) with the UAR within the shortest time possible after the takeover. The other states that hard-and-fast decisions on this point were deliberately postponed⁸. Examination of the proofs proffered for each line of thinking, as well as of the internal evidence, definitely favours the latter thesis. The Free Officers were then conducting their activities underground, in daily danger of life and liberty, planning the bloody overthrow of a regime whose powers of resistance they could not as yet gauge for certain. Some of them favoured unity with the UAR, though they did not necessarily advocate a policy of "Unity now." These included Aref, 'Abd al-Laṭīf al-Darrājī, Nājī Ṭālib and Rif'at Sirrī. Others—Muḥi al-Dīn 'Abd al-Ḥamīd and Waṣfī Ṭahīr—were opposed. The majority of officers may be assumed not to have made up their minds on a vital issue which did not demand an immediate decision. Qassem probably kept his own counsel.

It was asserted much later by a knowledgeable source unfriendly to Qassem that before the revolution the parties belonging to the United National Front had agreed on "some sort of union" between Iraq and "the other free Arab States." Unification of their armies, foreign policies and currencies was suggested, and "ultimately" the creation of a single

⁷ *Protocols*, V, p. 334.

⁸ e.g., *Akhbār al-Yawm*, Jan. 31, 1959, and *Rose al-Yūsuf*, Feb. 9, 1959, for the former thesis; *Protocols*, V, pp. 270, 466–7 for the latter.

federal capital, but no "clearcut definition was given...to the envisaged form of association⁹." A vague consensus of such opinion may well have been acknowledged by the Free Officers; this would explain the fury of the quarrel which broke out when the question was put to the acid test of practical politics.

* * *

The Free Officers kept in touch with the political parties loosely organized in the United National Front. Liaison officers were appointed to the different groups, including the communists. Muḥammad Ḥadīd was asked to assess the future republic's economic prospects. However, while opinions were solicited on the form that the post-revolutionary regime might take, no hard-and-fast promises were made by the central committee or by Qassem; nor did the civilians have a voice in the making of decisions on either immediate objectives or operational planning¹⁰.

Obviously even the central committee was not equipped to conduct the operational side of the plot with efficiency. The dispersal of the chief conspirators, the need for secrecy and for action based on swift timing, together with the inherent defects of the committee system, weighed heavily in favour of concentration in the hands of the executive. It was therefore only natural that the practical preparations should increasingly be taken over by Qassem. However, the main reason lay in Qassem's own personality. He was unable to cooperate with his colleagues as *primus inter pares* and his attitude was stiffened by his exalted view of his mission as his later career bears witness.

Thus the business of the movement was managed in all its crucial stages and details by Qassem in person from an early date. When the time for action came, the committee, to quote Aref, were "asleep at the side of their wives¹¹."

One of the important decisions Qassem had to make was whether he wanted assistance from outside Iraq, and if so, from whom and what form it should take. Circumstances limited the possible helpmates to Syria and Egypt until January 1958, and afterwards to the UAR as a single body. There is indisputable evidence that Qassem and Aref held meetings with high-ranking Syrian officers on Syrian soil early in 1958. According to Ḥasanayn Haykal, Abdel Nasser's mouthpiece, Qassem acquainted Abdel

⁹ *Muwāḥḥin*—*IT*, June 7, 1962.

¹⁰ Thus Qassem himself (*IT*, Nov. 28, 1958)

¹¹ *Majzara*, p. 44.

Nasser with his intentions by letter. He also asked for advice and operational support, as well as for asylum in case of failure. Abdel Nasser replied that it would not be in the interests of the venture to disclose its details to outsiders; he felt that Iraqis alone should take responsibility for its execution. Afterwards the UAR would give the new regime every aid in her power. Iraqi sources of the time admitted to the meeting, but denied by implication that a letter had been sent¹². In any case the evidence proves that Cairo had no part in the events of July 14 or in the preparations for them.

Otherwise Qassem's approach was pragmatic; he did not seek to force events. The one operational condition stipulated was that the three pillars of the regime should be eliminated at one blow: King Fayṣal the Second, held of little account for his personal qualities but important as a symbol and possible nucleus of resistance; the Crown Prince 'Abdul Ilāh, considered the mentor of his nephew; and Nuri, the Prime Minister of the Arab Federation, who was held first and foremost responsible for, and representative of, all that the regime stood for and the plotters resented. An attempt on their lives was first made during army manoeuvres in December 1957, when a live shell was aimed at the royal party. The shell burst far off enough to do no damage, and the incident was explained away. During the first half of 1958 a number of tentative dates were fixed for the coup, in connection with army movements to the west; but the movements were cancelled, and the coup had to be postponed.

When at last, around July 10, 1958, it became reasonably certain that the Twentieth Brigade from the Ba'Quba area would be shifted to Jordan via Baghdad within a few days, Qassem set his preparations in train, working at what must have been a feverish pace. During the few days left before the deadline he managed to draw up the revolutionary operation orders for the Nineteenth and Twentieth Brigades. He composed the first proclamations, and settled the composition of the Cabinet and the Sovereignty Council along the general lines previously agreed with civilian supporters of the revolution. He allocated the top appointments in the army and police and the civil and diplomatic services; he gave some sort of alert to a small number of army officers and to a yet smaller number of politicians. Last, but not least, he briefed Aref, commanding officer of the Third Battalion of the Twentieth Brigade, for the takeover of the capital. Later Aref maintained that he, and not Qassem, was responsible for the operational planning of the coup. In view of the actual events of

¹² *Ahrām*, Jan. 27, 1959; *Protocols*, V, pp. 242, 448; Jidda, *Thawrat al-za'im al-munqidh*, Baghdad, 1960, pp. 26-8.

July 13–14, and the enmity which quickly manifested itself between the two men, it could be expected that they might genuinely differ over what had been their respective roles. It seems likely, however, that Qassem, the acknowledged chairman of the revolutionary movement and a senior officer with greater military experience than Aref, drew up the plan in considerable detail himself. He certainly determined the appointments in the new regime, although he may have discussed them previously with Aref.

One vital detail for the successful execution of the coup had been taken care of by Brig. Nājī Tālib. Ordinarily the field forces of the Iraqi army, excepting the Royal Guards Brigade at Baghdad, were not provided with ammunition as an internal security precaution. Over the past year, however, at the urgent request of Tālib, then director of military training, certain amounts of light and anti-tank ammunition were issued from time to time to a number of units and formations “for use on manoeuvres.” The Free Officers who could do so had been systematically accumulating part of this ammunition against D-day. Thus by July 14, 1958, both the Nineteenth Brigade and the Third Battalion of the Twentieth Brigade had a useful stock of live ammunition at their disposal, without the knowledge of headquarters.

Precise details as to when and how the coup would be carried out were restricted to the fewest possible people—the senior Free Officers at the Ministry of Defence and members of the Third Division to which both Qassem and Aref belonged. A few particular confidants of Qassem—his cousin Col. Maḥdāwī for one—were also informed, along with the top leaders of the UNF. The majority of the Free Officers who had been allocated roles in the nation-wide takeover, as well as appointees to high office under the revolutionary regime, only learned of the revolution and of their duties over Baghdad Radio after the blow had been struck in the morning of July 14¹³. A few were informed by Qassem or Aref directly by telephone, among them Nājī Tālib himself.

¹³ An amusing instance is that of Col. ‘Abd al-Jabbār Yūnis who heard over his radio that he had been promoted commander of his brigade—the First—in the place of Brig. Waḥīq ‘Ārif, brother of the Chief of the General Staff. He could not believe the good news, and for this lack of faith he was subsequently arraigned together with Waḥīq ‘Ārif.

CHAPTER 2 THE TAKEOVER

In the second week of July 1958 the Royal Iraqi government decided, at the request of King Hussein of Jordan, to move an additional force into the north of that country. Disturbances were taking place in Lebanon which were believed to constitute a threat to the Hashimite regime in Jordan, the weaker partner in the Arab Federation which had been established by the two countries earlier in the year.

Accordingly the Twentieth Brigade of the Third Division stationed at Jalaula, ninety miles north-east of Baghdad, under the command of Brig. Aḥmad Ḥaqqī, received its marching orders for the night of July 13-14; it was to skirt the centre of Baghdad by the north and to proceed to Jordan along the Falluja-Ramadi highway. Ammunition for possible operations was to be issued to the brigade at Abu Ghayb camp west of the capital. Since the Twentieth Brigade was not to pass through the city, it was not considered necessary to alert the Baghdad garrison, including the Royal Guards Brigade; for the same reason the Minister of the Interior, responsible for the police and security forces, was also not informed of the intended movement.

Shortly after midnight, in the early hours of July 14, the brigade column arrived at Cassels' Post, a small railway halt two-thirds the distance between Jalaula and Baghdad. Brig. Ḥaqqī proceeded with an advance party to Falluja; the main body was to follow at a slower pace. It has been asserted that Ḥaqqī went on a wild-goose chase instigated by his staff. At any rate, his absence made it easier to begin the operation whose details had been worked out while Baghdad headquarters was busy with transportation schedules to Jordan.

At about 3 a.m. on July 14, Col. 'Abd al-Salām Aref, in command of the Third Battalion, assumed command of the Twentieth Brigade in the name of the Free Officers. Col. Darrājī, commanding officer of the First Battalion and a leading Free Officer himself, cooperated. The officer commanding the Second Battalion demurred and was arrested.

Meanwhile a liaison officer from the Baghdad cell of Free Officers arrived at Cassels' Post; this was none other than Nuri's principal aide-de-

camp, Lt.-Col. Waṣfī Ṭāhir. Col. Aref allocated duties and issued his orders. Before 4 a.m. the Brigade was rolling on, towards the centre of the sleeping capital.

At Baghdad the brigade deployed according to plan. The First Battalion occupied the left bank of the Tigris on which the greater part of Baghdad is situated. With the assistance of the Free Officers from the Baghdad garrison, the Ministry of Defence compound (which also housed the General Staff), the General Post Office, and other nerve centres were quickly seized. Rashīd camp on the southeastern edge of the city, and the adjacent military airfield, were also easily occupied. Lt.-Gen. Rafiq 'Ārif, whose living quarters were at Rashīd, was arrested in his bed.

However, it was on the right bank that the main targets of the conspirators lay, and Aref reserved their liquidation for himself and his battalion.

First and foremost was Rihāb Palace, a rather modest building on grounds bordering the highway to the west. It lay a short distance off the junction from where the Twentieth Brigade was to have resumed its advance to Jordan after the detour round the city, and was preferred by the King and Crown Prince 'Abdul Ilāh to the official royal residence, Qaṣr al-Zuhūr. The conspirators knew that both would be sleeping at Rihāb on the night of July 13–14 before their scheduled departure for Turkey on Baghdad Pact business early the following morning, accompanied by the Prime Minister.

Aref's other objectives were Nuri's own residence on the river bank, south of Queen 'Āliya bridge; Broadcasting House; the headquarters of the Mobile Police Force; Washshāsh army camp, next to Rihāb Palace—where the infantry and artillery schools, the main weapon and ammunition stores and the Armoured Corps headquarters were situated—and Baghdad airport.

Shortly before 5 a.m. the Third Battalion crossed the unguarded King Fayṣal Bridge, afterwards renamed Jisr al-Ahrār (Bridge of the Free) in honour of the event. The forces then dispersed to carry out their tasks. The Mobile Police Force headquarters surrendered at gun point and the men were sent on leave. Washshāsh camp was not difficult to bring under control, as the night duty officer, Capt. 'Abd al-Sattār al-Sab', was in the plot. Aref himself established his temporary headquarters at Broadcasting House, which stood by in readiness to announce the revolution to the nation and the world; there had been no guard to overcome, and the civilians were submissive or enthusiastically cooperative. Baghdad airport was occupied without resistance.

The coup could not be considered successful, however, before the triumvirate of the regime had been accounted for—the King, the Crown

Prince and the Prime Minister. Aref therefore disposed the better part of his battalion to seize the two residences, reserving about one company for the reduction of each. Since armed opposition might be reasonably expected, it was not to be a rush job; a military action was envisaged, beginning with investment of the targets, to be followed up by armed assault. Shortly after 5 a.m. the forces were nearing their positions for the two crucial operations of the coup. They went to kill.

That at least one of these operations achieved its object cannot be attributed to the efficiency with which it was conducted. The reports available give an impression of dilatoriness at the executive level, in contrast with the forcefulness demonstrated by Aref. Nuri—alerted by wild shooting—escaped by the unguarded back entrance of his house, crossed the river by boat and soon disappeared in the windings of the capital. He was discovered the following day, hurrying in woman's attire through the streets probably on his way to the Iranian frontier, and was killed by the mob.

A somewhat larger force under Capt. 'Abd al-Jawād Ḥamīd settled down before Rihāb Palace and opened desultory fire, which was returned by the palace guards, interspersed with anti-tank grenades aimed at the walls of the palace. So insecure did the rebel commander consider his position that Aref ordered up reinforcements from Washshāsh camp, by then in his hands; one of the arrivals was Capt. Sab'. The besieged party at the palace was able to remain in telephone communication with the outer world for several hours, and the commander of the Royal Guards battalion on duty, Col. Ṭaha al-Bāmīrī, who arrived at Rihāb from Zuhūr Palace half-an-hour after the siege had begun, could still enter the compound.

The royal party within was under no illusions as to what was going on. However, any chance of resistance was doomed by the behaviour of the Crown Prince. 'Abdul Ilāh showed abject defeatism from the first; to every suggestion of action that was broached he replied that their only hope lay in purchasing goodwill for permission to depart, and that resistance would mean certain death. Bāmīrī was despatched outside to order the palace guards to cease fire. Even so, it was past 7 a.m. before the insurgents entered the palace grounds and sent an emissary upstairs to call the royal party down. They all descended: the King; the Crown Prince; the Princess Nafīsa, 'Abdul Ilāh's mother the widow of King 'Alī of Hejaz; the Princess 'Ābadiya, the king's aunt; and several servants. The Princess Hiyām, 'Abdul Ilāh's wife, returned upstairs at the last moment¹.

¹ She was later permitted to depart for Saudi Arabia.

When the little procession arrived in the courtyard they were told to turn towards the palace wall, and were mowed down by Captain Sab' with a submachine gun. The time was nearly 7.30 a.m. About an hour earlier Col. Aref's voice had announced over the radio the death of the monarchy and the birth of the republic².

Outside Baghdad the takeover was accomplished smoothly, on the whole. The Twentieth Brigade had hardly left its base when, on Qassem's orders, detachments from the Nineteenth Brigade occupied the nearby headquarters of the Third Division at Ba'Quba, and arrested its commander, Maj.-Gen. Ghāzī al-Dāghistānī. At dawn the Nineteenth Brigade set out for the capital, in the wake of the Twentieth. Elsewhere the Free Officers received the signal to go ahead through Aref's clarion call on Baghdad Radio. Some half-hearted attempts to organize resistance were made by Maj.-Gen. 'Umar 'Alī, commanding the First Division at Diwaniya, and his subordinate, Brig. Wafiq 'Ārif, commanding the First Brigade at Musaiyib. These were easily overcome, amid shoutings but without a shot being fired.

The British-serviced air base of Habbaniya, including its radar installations, was taken over peacefully by Iraqi personnel under the command of Lt.-Col. 'Ārif 'Abd al-Razzāq. Elaborate investment of the base had been provided for, but it proved unnecessary. Murmurs were heard at the provincial centres of Diwaniya and Kirkuk, but they subsided within the day. At Mosul there was a demonstration in favour of the King early in the morning instigated, it was believed, by the great landowning families of the city. However, since the news from Baghdad left no doubt as to developments there, the monarchist crowds disappeared—or rapidly reversed

² R. *Baghdad*, July 14 [15], 1958. The first announcement of the revolution was made at 6.30 a.m. (*Revolution*, I, p. 255). Aref's claim that he personally broadcast the first news of the coup has never been seriously disputed.

Fayṣal's murder caused a measure of revulsion, or at least of regret, among the Iraqi public. Probably out of regard for this sentiment, both Qassem and Aref denied, on different occasions, that they had ordered his death; when Iraq renewed relations with Jordan, Qassem blamed Aref for the murder (*Manār*, Oct. 5, 1960). There is direct and credible evidence that the party which went to Riḥāb Palace had received orders from Aref to kill both Fayṣal and 'Abdul Ilāh (Maj. Maḥmūd Sab' al-Bayātī, in *MENA*, July 19 [21], 1958; Capt. 'Abd al-Jawād Ḥamid, in *Quick*, Munich, Aug. 16, 1958). It may be deduced from his character and record, and on the strength of the available evidence, that Qassem in his earlier instructions to Aref had been purposely vague.

their sympathies— and by noon the streets of Mosul echoed the cheers of Baghdad for the republic.

Other instances of dissent, either military or civilian, have not been recorded. Later in the morning, Brig. 'Abd al-Karim Qassem, by now the declared leader of the revolution and head of government, entered Baghdad and established himself at the Ministry of Defence. The monarchy had collapsed for all to see like a house of cards.

CHAPTER 3 THE CONSOLIDATION

The physical takeover had been accomplished. The new rulers now had to consolidate their hold. They had to prove their claim that the revolution—*al-thawra*—had come at last, and that it would be radically different from the numerous *coups d'état*—*inqilābāt*—known to the Iraqi public over the last twenty-two years.

Four pressing tasks faced the revolutionaries after their seizure of power:

- 1) the maintenance of order and security;
- 2) the statement of the revolutionary message;
- 3) the formation of a new government; and
- 4) the effacement of all traces of the old regime.

The preliminary stage of consolidation may be said to have begun with the broadcasting of the First Manifesto from Baghdad on the morning of July 14 and to have ended thirteen days later with the publication of the Provisional Constitution. While the regime lasted these two documents demarcated its message and furnished its justification—in the eyes of its leaders and supporters no less than of its detractors and enemies.

MAINTAINING ORDER

The first notice of the revolution to reach the public was Aref's impassioned broadcast at about 6.30 a.m. on July 14 to the people in which he invited them to go out and watch the edifices of tyranny crumble. Within the hour a mob of hundreds of thousands was milling through the streets screaming its joy and its thirst for vengeance. The huge underswell of Baghdad's dispossessed rose and threatened to engulf everything. The revolutionaries were apparently unprepared for this reaction, although events in previous coups should have forewarned them.

The mob tried to raze the British Embassy, and its buildings were heavily damaged before the army drove the crowds off. In the *mêlée*, the embassy comptroller was killed. Jordanian ministers and officers in Baghdad on Arab Federation business were arrested in their hotel by army pickets.

Before they could be secured in the Ministry of Defence, they and their guards were set upon by demonstrators, and the aged Ibrāhīm Hāshim, Deputy Federal Prime Minister, Sulaymān Ṭuqān, Federal Minister of Defence, one Jordanian diplomat and one Jordanian army officer were killed, together with a Western businessman arrested by mistake.

The royal palaces were overrun by multitudes who began to carry off whatever they could seize, and destroy the rest, as they had been virtually called upon to do by Aref. Among the lesser acts of vandalism was the desecration of the Turkish war cemetery. The statues of King Fayṣal I and Gen. Maude, conqueror of Baghdad in 1917, were overturned. Christians and Jews fearfully watched as slogans calling for their deaths were carried through the streets¹.

At first the revolutionary command merely appealed for "calm and order." At about 10 a.m. curfew was announced, to start at 1 p.m. The injunction to keep indoors was not obeyed. With 'Abdī's assumption of power as Military Governor General in the afternoon, however, leadership began to be asserted. Armoured patrols appeared in force and steadily headed the throng off the main thoroughfares. Apparently little violence was necessary. Their newly won prestige as national liberators had its effect. The curfew order was repeated time and again, and by 9 p.m. it was obeyed. Two hours earlier, 'Abdī issued a ban on all assemblies and demonstrations. This was to nip in the bud any disorders that might threaten the following day, when, on Qassem's orders, all government offices were to be reopened, and work resumed.

A year later Qassem asserted with pride that "in the glorious revolution of the 14th July only nineteen people were killed²." There is no reason to doubt this estimate. If we take the background into account, the casualty list is very short; great credit must be given to 'Abdī for restoring a deteriorating situation with the minimum of brute force.

STATEMENT OF THE REVOLUTIONARY MESSAGE

From shortly before 7 a.m. that day, excited voices from Baghdad Radio had been informing the people of Iraq that a revolution headed by the army was under way to rid the country of "slavery and humiliation."

¹ e.g., "No Jews, no [inter-Arab] frontiers, no Christianity!" The author has been told by a former Jewish resident of Baghdad that during the first days after the revolution he and his family did not leave their home for fear of an anti-Jewish outbreak.

² *R. Baghdad*, July 29 [31], 1959.

At 8 a.m. the First Manifesto was broadcast by "the Acting Commander-in-Chief of the National Armed Forces" at "Army General Headquarters."

The First Manifesto

The proclamation had evidently been prepared with care. The importance attributed to it in official publications, and on every conceivable patriotic occasion, during the following four-and-a-half years shows that Qassem regarded it as the Iraqi Declaration of Independence.

A brief document of some two hundred words, as read on the morning of July 14 the proclamation clearly assumed that the takeover was not yet complete, although no doubts were revealed as to the outcome.

The salient points it contained were that in the past the country had been ruled by a "corrupt clique" in the service of imperialism. It was against this clique that the army had risen, and it would expect the support of the people of whom it was a part and on whose behalf it was acting. A "government emanating from the people" would be formed to head a "popular" or People's Republic—*jumhūriyya sha'biyya*. The new regime pledged itself to uphold "complete Iraq unity," maintain "bonds of fraternity" with the Arab and Muslim countries, and honour "all pledges and treaties in accordance with the interests of the homeland" and the principles of Bandoeng. A Council of Sovereignty had been appointed to serve until "the people are consulted to elect a president." The proclamation began and ended with an invocation to the Almighty.

This states in condensed form many of the basic principles which Qassem tried his utmost to uphold until the end, through extreme fluctuations of strategy and tactics. Iraqi nationalism is stressed. Whilst professing Arab solidarity, the wording of the document amounts to a renunciation of the desire for Arab political unity then at its most insistent. Neutrality without prejudice is pledged. Noncommittal deference is paid to Islamic tradition. Even the devolution to constitutional government is already promised here.

The authorship of the First Manifesto has become a matter of controversy. Qassem and his supporters claimed the credit as his, both explicitly and by constant implication. On the other hand, Aref later asserted that during his interview with Qassem before the latter's execution he asked Qassem on the Holy Koran whether he, Aref, had not been the sole author of the First Manifesto; Qassem kept silent³. Nevertheless, as with the

³ *Hayāt*, Feb. 17, 1963.

planning for the takeover, it hardly seems credible that Qassem should leave so vital a matter to a subordinate, however trusted.

The Provisional Constitution

In contrast, the Provisional Constitution was not the work of one person. It was drawn up by a ministerial committee established by a Cabinet decision of July 16, and was made public on July 27. Qassem introduced it over Baghdad Radio and then ceremoniously delegated to Aref the honour of reading it out for the first time.

The following briefly summarizes the main points of the Provisional Constitution:

The revolution was carried out by the army to achieve the people's sovereignty (preamble).

The Organic Law of 1925 and its amendments were abolished as from July 14, 1958 (preamble).

The Iraqi state was an independent and fully sovereign republic (section 1).

Iraq was part of the Arab nation (section 2).

Arabs and Kurds were considered partners in the homeland (*waṭan*); their national (*qawmiyya*) rights within Iraqi unity (*waḥda*) were recognized (section 3).

Islam was the religion of the state (section 4).

All citizens were equal before the law, without regard to race, nationality, language or religion (section 9).

Freedom of thought and expression was guaranteed (section 10).

Personal freedom and the sanctity of the home were guaranteed and could not be violated except for reasons of public security to be defined by law (section 11).

Freedom of religion was guaranteed (section 12).

Private ownership was guaranteed and the law was to "regulate its social function" (section 13).

Agricultural ownership was to be limited and regulated by law (section 14).

No organization or group except the state was allowed to raise military or para-military forces (section 18).

The presidency of the republic would be vested in a Council of Sovereignty (section 20).

Legislative power was to be vested in the Cabinet with the approval of the Council of Sovereignty (section 21).

Executive power was to be vested in the Cabinet and in each minister within his own jurisdiction (section 22).

The judiciary was independent (section 23).

All decrees issued by the Commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces, the Prime Minister, or the Council of Sovereignty between July 14, 1958, and the date of the coming into force of the Provisional Constitution would be law (section 27).

The Provisional Constitution went a long way towards conferring unlimited powers on the executive. Its most significant provision was section 27, which ensured that the military administration imposed immediately after the revolution remained in force, thus obviating any need for further ratification at a future date which might prove embarrassing.

THE NEW GOVERNMENT

Since the revolution had been initiated to oust the "corrupt clique" in favour of a "government emanating from the people," the first task of governance was obviously to designate the leading positions in the state.

The revolutionaries took some trouble to create the semblance of legality for their actions. The First Manifesto ("Proclamation No. 1") was broadcast in the name of the "Commander-in-Chief of the National Armed Forces," that is, the section of the army acting on behalf of the revolution. Qassem was not yet mentioned in person. Baghdad Radio then continued to issue further numbered proclamations and decrees, at brief intervals. These included announcement of the following:

The formation of the Council of Sovereignty and its composition, again signed by the "Commander-in-Chief of the National Armed Forces" (Proclamation No.2).

The appointments of Brig. 'Abd al-Karim Qassem as "Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces" and of the Deputy Commander-in-Chief,

Col. 'Abd al-Salām Aref, signed by the members of the Council of Sovereignty (Republican Decree No. 1).

(The omission of the designation "National" Armed Forces indicated the regularization that had taken place; the post was deemed constitutional and comprehensive, no longer revolutionary and selective.)

The appointment of the Cabinet, signed by the members of the Council of Sovereignty and Qassem, now named as Prime Minister and Acting Minister of Defence (Republican Decree No. 2).

The appointments to the seven top positions in the armed forces, with Brig. Aḥmad Ṣāliḥ al-'Abdī Chief of the General Staff, his assistant for administration, the commanders of the four divisions and the Commander of the Air Force (Republican Decree No. 3). The appointments were made "on the recommendation of the Acting Minister of Defence" and signed by the members of the Council of Sovereignty and the Prime Minister.

The nomination of senior army officers to top positions in the civil service, the police and the diplomatic service, on the recommendation of the Cabinet, signed by the Council of Sovereignty and the ministers concerned (Republican Decree No. 5).

The nominations to some forty high-ranking appointments in the Ministry of Defence and the army, "approved by the Acting Minister of Defence" (GHQ Communiqué).

The recital of these announcements was already over by about 9.40 a.m.

* * *

The last important announcement of the day was made seven hours later. At about 4.30 p.m., Proclamation No. 3, signed by Qassem as Commander-in-Chief, declared martial law throughout Iraq and appointed Brig. 'Abdī, the newly gazetted Chief of the General Staff, Military Governor General.

A supplement to the proclamation soon made the scope of "martial law" unambiguously clear: Although "temporary", it was to stay in force until repealed; the country's administration was to be "purely military," with the Military Governor General exercising authority over every department, the application of every law to be suspended at the Military Governor General's discretion. The broadcast associated the measure with the Martial Administration Ordinance No. 18 of 1935; not unnaturally, this

reference to a law promulgated by the old regime was omitted when Proclamation No. 3 and its supplement were published in the Official Gazette nine days later. Still on the evening of July 14 Baghdad Radio announced the names of the judges to serve on the military court formed in accordance with the proclamation.

Since Proclamation No. 3 and its supplement proved to be *de facto* the Basic Law of the regime, it would be valuable to investigate their origin. Unfortunately, little information can be obtained. It is unlikely that the imposition of military government was part of the original plan; if it had been, its proclamation would hardly have been delayed until the afternoon. It is still less likely that the scope was premeditated. Qassem's military accomplices would not have agreed to such a concentration of power in the hands of one man, who, if well chosen, would be his chief's tool—if not, his supplanter. The civilian partners surely would have objected strongly. Qassem might of course have taken the step without consulting anybody excepting, perhaps, Aref. Such thoroughness, however, does not accord with Qassem's methods.

It is more probable that the decision to institute military government was taken at some time during July 14, motivated by panic. The mob was raging through the capital, and among the possibilities that arose were foreign invasion, an irreversible resolution for merger with the UAR, or chaos leading to ruin. At such a moment the most inveterate champions of civilian rule would acquiesce to an emergency measure, particularly, when qualified as "temporary." With the passage of time it was only natural that Qassem found administration by martial law increasingly indispensable, the more so since he knew it to be wielded by a friend of rare parts.

Brig. Aḥmad Šāliḥ al-ʿAbdī was born in 1912. He was that rarity among senior personnel of the Iraqi army—an officer bent on doing his day-to-day job, efficient, balanced, loyal and unambitious politically. On the other hand, as Military Governor General, ʿAbdī had the faults consistent with his virtues. His finger was not on the popular pulse, and he needed a lead to deal with the long-term danger as distinct from the acute crisis. Aside from any wish to defer to Qassem, ʿAbdī did not favour the accession of Iraq to the UAR. He was temperamentally unsuited to espouse extremist causes; he felt that public peace, precarious as it was, could ill bear the additional strain of a political union which was opposed by many. Moreover, as evident in Syria, accession would have meant a sharp downgrading of the Iraqi officers corps. On somewhat parallel grounds ʿAbdī opposed the communists. In this case his professional background seems to have sharpened his aversion to a "peasants' and workers' republic."

'Abdī retained his dual appointment as Chief of the General Staff and Military Governor General until Qassem's downfall. In spite of vague rumours to the contrary at a later date, there is little doubt that Qassem's faith in his loyalty was not misplaced.

Sticklers for legal accuracy occasionally argued in the Iraqi press during Qassem's rule that the military government with which the regime had become identified rested on a law passed during the period of the monarchy and that it was therefore a constitutional anomaly. Whether or not the critics really believed in this argument, it was basically unsound. The martial-law administration was exercised on the authority of the new Commander-in-Chief, conferred on him in law by section 27 of the Provisional Constitution, in reality by the revolution.

* * *

The top appointments of July 14 which were to bear most closely on later developments were as follows:

The Council of Sovereignty:

President, Lt.-Gen. Najīb al-Rubay'ī;

Members, Muḥammad Mahdī Kubba and Khālīd al-Naqshbandī.

The Cabinet:

Prime Minister and Acting Minister of Defence, Brig. 'Abd al-Karīm Qassem;

Deputy Prime Minister and Acting Minister of the Interior, Col. 'Abd al-Salām Aref;

Minister of Finance, Muḥammad Ḥadīd;

Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. 'Abd al-Jabbār al-Jūmurīd;

Minister of Economic Affairs, Dr. Ibrāhīm Kubba;

Minister of Education, Dr. Jābir 'Umar;

Minister of Social Affairs, Brig. Nāḥī Ṭalīb;

Minister of Communications and Public Works, Bābā 'Alī;

Minister of Development, Fu'ād al-Rikābī;

Minister of Health, Dr. Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Maḥmūd;

Minister of Agriculture, Hudayb al-Ḥājj Ḥmūd;

Minister of Guidance, Ṣiddīq Shanshal;

Minister of Justice, Muṣṭafā 'Alī.

The Army and Security Forces:

Commander-in-Chief, Brig. 'Abd al-Karīm Qassem;

Deputy Commander-in-Chief, Col. 'Abd al-Salām Aref;

Army Chief of Staff, Brig. Aḥmad Ṣāliḥ al-'Abdī;

Commander, First (Infantry) Division, Brig. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-‘Uqayli;
Commander, Second (Infantry) Division, Brig. Nāzīm al-Ṭabaqchalī;
Commander, Third (Infantry) Division, Brig. Khalīl Sa‘īd;
Commander, Fourth (Armoured) Division, Brig. Muḥī al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd;
Commander-in-Chief of the Air Force, Col. Jalāl al-Awqāṭī;
Director-General of Police, Rtd. Col. Ṭāhīr Yaḥyā;
Director-General of Security, Col. ‘Abd al-Majīd Jalīl.

* * *

We have it on the authority of Kāmil Chaderchi that Qassem himself determined the composition of the revolutionary Cabinet, a few days before the coup took place⁴.

The first Cabinet has often been described as a wall-to-wall coalition comprising all the political groupings in the country excepting the Iraqi Communist Party, which was, however, represented by at least one close sympathizer.

Is this definition correct? Since its members were appointed, the Cabinet cannot be termed a coalition in the constructive sense. It was an unsorted combination of all the political elements opposed to the Nuri regime, but had no agreed positive programme. Before victory, their fundamental disparity could indeed appear a distinction without a difference—but not afterwards.

The inevitable result of this weakness can be seen as later Cabinets were increasingly to be formed of technicians with a stiffening of “Qassem’s friends”—senior officers on whose personal loyalty the Prime Minister could rely. The first Cabinet, with all its conflicting cross-currents, was ideologically independent.

The political composition of the first Cabinet was as follows:

The Free Officers were represented by only three of their members. This figure includes the leading positions of Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister held by Qassem and Aref. Aref, as Minister of the Interior was also responsible for the police and security departments. In view of his prominence in the Free Officers movement Nājī Ṭālib’s appointment as Minister of Social Affairs must be regarded as an honourable demotion; it instances one of the first of those acts of management in which Qassem was to prove himself a master.

⁴ *Al-‘Ahd al-Jadīd*, May 1, 1962 (letter to the editor from Chaderchi).

The National Democratic Party was represented by its deputy chairman Muḥammad Hadīd, and by another prominent member of its executive, Hudayb al-Ḥājj Ḥmūd, a landowner who had become known for his progressive views on the agrarian question.

The Istiqlāl Party was represented by its secretary Siddiq Shanshal, a lawyer educated at the Sorbonne; he had been Rashid 'Alī's director of Information in 1941.

The Ba'th Party had its regional secretary in the Cabinet, the engineer Fu'ād al-Rikābī. As Minister of Development he returned to head the establishment from which he had been dismissed a year previously for his politics.

The Cabinet included two other nationalist politicians, though without party affiliation at the time. They were Dr. 'Abd al-Jabbār al-Jūmur, a historian and ex-deputy from Mosul, and Dr. Jābir 'Umar, German-educated and also a former deputy, who at the time of the coup was living as an exile in Damascus. The last-named was the most fervently pro-Nasser member of the Cabinet.

The Ministers of Justice and Health were both men with professional qualifications and a record of opposition to the ancient regime. Mustafā 'Alī had been a judge of appeal, Dr. Maḥmūd a physician and hospital director. Both were Kurds.

The UDPK: Kurdish nationalism appeared to receive its due in the person of Bābā 'Alī. He was the son of Shaykh Maḥmūd al-Barzenchi, the Sulaimaniya chief who had troubled the Baghdad authorities in the 1920s and thirties. His son had become, to use the expression of S.H. Longrigg, a "ministerial Kurd"—a Kurd whose family antecedents made him a useful vehicle for the conveyance of official gestures towards the Kurds, but who himself had, through education and environment, lost the capacity to fight his people's battles.

The Iraqi Communist Party was not represented in the Cabinet. However, it was widely believed both in Iraq and abroad that its spokesman was the Sorbonne-educated economist Dr. Ibrāhīm Kubba, a declared Marxist and "scientific socialist" who had more than once come into conflict with Nuri's police.

The names of three prominent politicians are conspicuous by their absence: those of the NDP chairman, Kāmil al-Chaderchi; its secretary, the lawyer Ḥusayn Jamil; and the Istiqlāl vice-chairman, Fā'iq al-Sāmarrā'i. All three had been instrumental in the pre-revolution negotiations with the Free Officers. It had been presumed that Chaderchi was considered for

Minister of Economic Affairs but declined to serve in a government essentially controlled by the army. Ḥusayn Jamīl probably agreed to abstain with Chaderchi. Sāmarrā'ī was on bad terms with Qassem even at this early date.

There is evidence to show that the composition of the Council of Sovereignty was determined by Qassem as had been that of the Cabinet⁵. From Qassem's point of view the choice was admirable. The president was a Sunni Arab who had as associates a Kurd and a Shi'i Arab. This was a "progressive" distribution of seats which as yet did no violence to traditional Sunni preeminence. As a high-ranking officer the president, Rubay'ī, would also satisfy army hankerings for a representation carrying prestige. Well known to Qassem as his one-time superior, Rubay'ī was an elderly gentleman of distinguished appearance, without political ambition and unlikely to prove a disturbing element. The Kurdish member, Naqshbandī, a former provincial governor, had an unblemished public career and bore a name famous in the north; he had no personal or party affiliations among his people likely to prove troublesome for Baghdad. Kubba, the Shi'i, was by far the most widely known of the three; he was a founder-member and chairman of the Istiqlāl Party and a former minister. His reputation as an uncompromising nationalist and Anglophobe would boost the new regime in the prevailing public opinion; his age and poor health would not permit over-activity.

The senior appointments announced early in the morning of July 14 had been reportedly ratified by the signatures of the members of the Council of Sovereignty and the appropriate ministers. Yet the president of the council did not arrive from Jedda until a day later⁶.

* * *

The Council of Revolutionary Command that was to have been formed after the revolution from within the central committee of the Free Officers never came into existence.

On the morning of July 14 Col. 'Abd al-Wahhāb Amīn, a leading Free Officer and newly appointed director of Military Operations over the radio, called on Qassem at the Defence Ministry. He demanded proclamation of the Council of Revolutionary Command, "as agreed." Qassem, according to Amīn, was agreeable, and referred him to Aref. Aref told Amīn that he saw no necessity for such a council, but promised in an ungracious manner to let him have a final reply after "some days."

⁵ Jidda, pp. 60-1.

⁶ *R. Baghdad*, July 16 [17], 1958.

Ten days later Amīn found himself appointed military attaché at Cairo—he received the news while there on a delegation for the July 23 celebrations of the Egyptian revolution. The reply never came⁷.

Also on the morning of July 14 Nāji Tālib was perplexed to hear over the radio at far-away Basra that he had been appointed Minister of Social Affairs. This did not accord with his previous “assumption that we would not be ministers, but a Revolutionary Council would be formed⁸.”

Nāji Tālib was the most formidable member of the Free Officers after Qassem. His chagrin at being manoeuvred from a central position into a ministerial seat of little political consequence must have been acute. At Aref's subsequent trial, in December 1958, he professed ignorance as to why no council had been formed. Other sources unconnected with the prosecution of Aref's trial also made Aref appear responsible⁹. If any remonstrances were proffered, they were of no avail. From the early hours of the revolution the combination of Qassem, Aref and 'Abdī entrenched itself too strongly, leaving Tālib and his colleagues little alternative other than acquiescence.

There can be little doubt that it was Qassem who stood behind the jettisoning of the Revolutionary Council, whilst finding it expedient to shelter behind Aref. Aref, pushing and tactless where Qassem was vague and courteous, could certainly be relied upon to welcome the idea, as well as the obtrusive part he could take in its implementation; at the time the presence of a Revolutionary Council might detract from his own position.

Aref's attitude at his trial when asked by Mahdāwī (see below) why he had objected to the formation of a Revolutionary Council during the first days after the revolution is interesting:

Aref: “The revolution has its secrets . . . The answer to this question is a matter for the Leader... I am faithful to the Leader; please look for the answer from him.”

Mahdāwī: “It is you that the court is trying. Please answer if you will, or else we shall ask you another question.”

Aref: “Please ask another question¹⁰.”

Plainly it was not regard for Aref that made Mahdāwī behave with such delicacy.

⁷ *Protocols*, V, pp. 253, 257.

⁸ *ibid.*, p. 334.

⁹ e.g., *Mid. Mir.*, Oct. 12, 1958, quoting an “Iraqi government spokesman.”

¹⁰ *Protocols*, V, p. 442.

Amīn regarded the failure to form a council as a main reason for the “dissensions” that were to arise subsequently¹¹. However this may be, to the historian the particular interest of this chapter lies in the demonstration of Qassem’s first major intrigue after coming to power. Qassem is revealed as a shrewd and velvet-gloved manipulator outmanoeuvring with easy elegance his adversaries of the hour, but losing in the process the confidence of people whom he could ill afford to alienate.

EFFACING THE OLD REGIME

The new men, if they wanted to substantiate their revolutionary programme, would have to eradicate all traces of the old regime and lose no time in showing their determination.

Removal of the three main pillars had been achieved as part of the coup itself. Nuri’s escape at the time had been only temporary. The property of the royal family was declared confiscated on July 19, 1958.

There were then the national institutions to be swept clear—the government, the two houses of parliament, the civil, police and security services—apart from other potential opposition to be quashed.

The last Cabinet of the monarchy was never formally dismissed; it was deemed to have dissolved together with the monarchy. The houses of parliament disappeared with the old Organic Law.

Also prearranged, and announced on the day of the coup was the dismissal from active service of all army officers above the rank then held by Qassem—i.e., of brigadier¹².

Altogether 112 army officers were gazetted as retired during July- August 1958. Of these, a considerable number were reinstated in senior positions in the civil service. At the end of July, forty-five officials of the security and related services were dismissed. The list was headed by Bahjat al-‘Aṭiyya, the royal Director-General of Security¹³.

The first two laws enacted under the republic were promulgated on August 4 “For the Purge of the Judiciary” and “For the Purge of the Government Services.” Their declared purpose was to obviate “weak elements that had invaded [the judiciary and administration] because of the corruption of the extinct regime”—a useful umbrella description. Originally due to lapse after six months, the legislation was perpetuated by successive

¹¹ *ibid.*, pp. 253–4.

¹² The decree was first monitored at 14.00 GMT (*R. Baghdad*, July 14 [16], 1958); see also *WI*, No. 1, July 23, 1958, pp. 3–4.

¹³ *IT*, Aug. 4, 1958.

extensions, and section 23 of the Provisional Constitution, which guaranteed the independence of the judiciary, was thus deprived of any effectiveness.

About one hundred persons were reported arrested. They included members of the Astrabādi family who had sheltered Nuri for a brief time after the coup. The property of some seventy politicians and senior officers was impounded.

Legal proceedings for the prosecution of "malefactors" were soon instituted when the Special Supreme Military Court was called into existence by the "Law for the Punishment of Conspirators against the Safety of the Homeland and of Corrupters of Government," of August 7, 1958.

The public, however, had been given earlier notice of these intentions. In the morning hours of July 21 a proclamation signed by Qassem was broadcast over Baghdad Radio. This called on "every member of the public" who was in a position to do so to give evidence before a board of investigation set up at the Ministry of Defence, prior to proceedings against "men of the old regime" before a special military court. The same evening the composition of the court was published in a Republican Decree, the execution of which was entrusted to the Minister of Defence. The president was to be Col. Fāḍil 'Abbās al-Mahdāwī, Qassem's cousin. Of the five associate judges named in the decree Lt.-Col. Mājīd Muḥammad Amīn acted from the first as chief prosecutor of the court. Mahdāwī had no professional qualifications, but Mājīd Amīn had graduated from law school while serving as a regular officer in the Engineers Corps.

It seems that this was the fulfilment of many years of premeditation on Qassem's part. He asserted in 1959 that "fifteen years ago" he had told Mahdāwī that one day the latter would preside over the trial of the traitors against the homeland¹⁴.

The law of August 7 contained two Chapters. Chapter I stated the offences under its purview, while Chapter II outlined the authority of the court and the procedure it was to adopt. The law was designed to penalize the following types of offender:

"Any person . . . using his influence or participating in—

"forcing the policy of the homeland in a direction contrary to the general interest by bringing the homeland closer to the dangers of war or by turning it into a war theatre;

¹⁴ R. *Baghdad-IMB*, Aug. 13, 1959.

Land and People



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Kurdish village in the north-east

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Vegetable growing in the south



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Tawila players—street scene in Baghdad

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Shi'i flagellants—'*Ashūrā*' procession at Karbala



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College girls

"using the armed forces of the country against the Arab sister countries or threatening to use them so; inciting foreign countries to interfere with their safety; conspiring for the overthrow of the regime existing in these countries; interfering in the internal affairs of these countries against their interests; spending funds to conspire against them; giving refuge to conspirators against them; defaming their chiefs in international forums; abusing, slandering and insulting them through publications—

shall be deemed a conspirator against the safety of the homeland."

"Any person ...

"abandoning, suppressing or fettering the fundamental freedoms provided by the Organic Law then valid, by issuing laws, decrees, ordinances, instructions or orders contrary to the fundamental conditions laid down in that law;

"issuing laws [etc.] in the interest of persons or groups of persons at the expense of the public interest ...

"tampering with the judicature or the executive ...

"tampering with the freedom of general elections ...

"influencing the morale of the people in order to weaken their ability to carry out their responsibilities and practise their rights:

"prohibiting or obstructing the implementation of legislation aimed at realizing social justice and equality between the citizens;

"squandering government funds ..., showing negligence in the collection of revenue ..., accepting money contrary to the public interest ...—

shall be deemed a corrupter of government."

Persons found guilty of "having conspired against the safety of the homeland" would be liable to a maximum sentence of forced labour for life; those of "having corrupted government" to forced labour "for a limited period."

Of Chapter II the following provisions are of particular interest:

The formation of the Special Supreme Military Court to have authority to try offences committed "under this law or other penal laws."

The authorization of the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, among other wide powers which were conferred on him, to withdraw any criminal case from any court and refer it to the Special Supreme Military Court.

"Sentences pronounced by the Special Supreme Military Court shall be final and no appeal shall be allowed."

"...death sentences shall be executed after the approval of the Minister of Defence who also shall have the authority to commute or revoke sentences..."

"The general provisions laid down in the Baghdad Penal Code and the Baghdad Criminal Procedure Law shall be applied in all cases not provided for in this law."

Among the features of the law that must be pointed out is first and foremost the blatant disregard for the letter and the spirit of the Provisional Constitution. The military character of the regime is laid bare.

Secondly, the law is obviously retroactive, dealing with offences committed at a time when the law against them did not exist.

A third feature is the weight accorded to Arab nationalism. Chapter I specifically couples activities directed against the "Arab sister countries" (which in the context inevitably recalled the UAR) with conspiracy against the safety of the homeland, while defamation of the chief of an Arab sister country rates a greater punishment than the most serious offences committed against the Iraqi citizen.

Fourthly, the drafting is careless. The designations of Commander-in-Chief and Minister of Defence are confused in Chapter II: to be sure, in practice the distinction was unimportant since both functions were united under one person. There is casual but explicit reference to capital punishment, which was definitely excluded from the penalties under this particular law. A "Special Supreme Military Court" is established but no reference is made to the Republican Decree of July 21 dealing with the matter. Such instances of unprofessional drafting lead one to infer that the Minister of Justice, who appeared among the signatories, had never seen the bill before it was made law.

* * *

On August 9, the roll of the accused was published. It was divided into two parts; one contained the names of thirty army officers and the other of seventy-eight civilians, among them a woman¹⁵. In both lists the names

¹⁵ *IT*, Aug. 11, 1958.

of some of the most prominent personalities in the kingdom appeared side by side with those of nonentities whose offences could not possibly have been conjectured by the public before their appearance at the trial.

The year-and-a-half's activity of Maḥdāwī's court may be divided into several phases. Only the first, dealing with offences committed under the monarchy, can be regarded as falling within the scope of our present chapter.

On August 16, 1958, Maḥdāwī's court commenced its hearings in the plenary hall of the former Chamber of Deputies. The trials dealt with alleged plots against the independence of Syria, and with misconduct on behalf of the "corrupt regime."

It was during this first phase of activity that Maḥdāwī's court approached Western traditional concepts of a court of justice most closely. The accused were given a hearing. Their counsel conscientiously tried to defend them, although their pleas were invariable larded with flattery of the court and the principles it stood for. The president treated the accused with reasonable courtesy. In general, decorum and order were maintained.

From the first an anti-fascist orientation was noticeable. Jabs at Hitler, Mussolini and Franco, unusual in the speeches of Arab politicians, can be interpreted as the first manifestations of communist influence in the court. Abdel Nasser was frequently mentioned with great respect by both the president and prosecuting counsel, as indeed the nature of the charges would lead one to expect. In return, the court was complimented by the press and radio commentators in the UAR. A corollary, curious in view of the subsequent history of the court, was that the defence occasionally cited Abdel Nasser and other prominent UAR personalities as character witnesses for their clients.

The defendants showed remarkably little spirit, though some inevitably behaved with greater dignity than others. In their defence they did their utmost to adopt the moral and political criteria of the court. Only Fāḍil al-Jamālī, a former Prime Minister, vigorously defended the Western alignment of Iraq as being a necessary counter to world communism. Later the same position was taken by Sa'īd Qazzāz. The general pusillanimity of the defendants may be explained as arising from human frailty, as lack of courage peculiar to political circles in Iraq, or as furnishing yet another proof of the rottenness of the old regime. Probably some truth can be adduced for each.

Of the nine death sentences imposed by the court during this phase none was carried out immediately.

* * *

While offenders under the old regime and its parasites were eliminated, its former victims were due to be rehabilitated. A major grievance harboured against the old regime was that all persons whom it considered disloyal—i.e., all those representing the progressive, wholesome and independent elements in Iraqi society—were hampered and harassed. This the new regime hastened to repair.

Ten days after the revolution, the claim of the Minister of Justice that “the political detainees on whom no particular sentence had been passed were released immediately after the revolution” seems to have been substantiated¹⁶. He went on to explain that the cases of prisoners who had been formally sentenced “required separate study, because the extinct regime had resorted to trickery to change the nature of the crime...” and announced that “a special committee had been formed at the Ministry of Justice to discuss these cases.” Once the committee was satisfied that the person concerned had been sentenced for genuinely political reasons, the minister would bring a recommendation for amnesty before the Cabinet, where the Minister of the Interior would have “the right to object to the release of any prisoner”; Aref, however, never exercised his prerogative. The number of prisoners affected varies according to different sources from 140 to 220. The great majority were communists, or considered to be communists.

The rehabilitation was consummated by the “Law for the Pardon of Political Offenders,” published on September 4, which proclaimed a general amnesty for all political offences committed between September 1, 1939, and July 13, 1958. The law also ordered the restitution of fines to the victims or their heirs, and in certain cases their indemnification. However, by means of a convenient escape clause the amnesty did not apply to “crimes against the safety of the homeland or contrary to the main principles of the revolution.”

Immediately after the revolution a number of Kurdish nationalists were released from detention with considerable publicity, among them Shaykh Aḥmad, Mullā Muṣṭafā Barzani's elder brother. At the beginning of September an official invitation was despatched to Mullā Muṣṭafā himself, in reply to his request to return from his exile in the Soviet Union. These developments will be dealt with in greater detail in another context.

To round off the process of restoration, the Cabinet abolished police supervision of political suspects. Iraqi citizenship was restored to all who had been deprived of it for political reasons. Iraqi representatives abroad were instructed to offer aid to all exiles who wished to return. Finally,

¹⁶ *MENA*, July 24 [26], 1958.

all teachers, students and government employees who had been expelled or dismissed for political reasons were reinstated.

* * *

The image of the monarchy in Iraq, as of every other system of government, had been imprinted on the minds of its subjects by its outward and visible symbols and by the existence of certain social institutions.

Of the symbols serving the old regime, the official designation of the state itself, *al-Mamlaka al-'Irāqiyya*, disappeared when the First Manifesto declared the Republic of Iraq. Within the hour, Republican Decree No. 4 had announced the renaming of army brigades called after royal personages; this was a measure to which the revolutionary army officers would naturally attach importance. By July 29 only stamps overprinted "*Al-Jumhūriyya al-'Irāqiyya*" were supposed to be on sale in post offices. On August 24 *Allahu Akbar*, a nationalist marching song praising the UAR, was decreed the new national anthem¹⁷. The republican coat-of-arms was confirmed by the Cabinet on November 24, 1958. The new flag was first flown on the first anniversary of the revolution¹⁸. One minor but conspicuous anachronism was retained on the uniforms of army officers: the crown on the badge of rank was not replaced until 1960, and for as long as he remained a brigadier the founder of the republic appeared in public with the symbol of monarchy on his shoulder tabs.

Among the early measures taken by the new regime was the abolition of social institutions which Iraqis identified with the old order and British influence, such as horse-racing and betting. The Ladies Club, a Baghdad society meeting place with no political pretensions, was closed on 'Abdī's order¹⁹. A scurrilous notion existed that the main function of the Jockeys' and Ladies' clubs respectively had been to procure young men and girls for 'Abdul Ilāh's bed.

Finally, the new regime had to take issue with the traditional policies most closely associated by the public with the monarchy. These policies stemmed from its collaboration with the West and the estrangement from Arab nationalism.

¹⁷ According to *Gumhuriyya*, Cairo, Aug. 25, 1958. *Allahu Akbar* was indeed played over Baghdad Radio at the opening and closedown of its programmes for some time after the revolution; it was superseded by a new *Salām Jumhūri*.

¹⁸ It may be noted as a curiosity that the flag of the old regime still appeared on the cover of Mahdāwī's court *Protocols* issued in 1962.

¹⁹ *Mid. Mir.*, July 27; *IT*, July 30; *R. Baghdad*, Aug. 12 [14], 1958.

The vital interests involved were so complex that the new rulers' approach would go far to show their political abilities and the extent to which they valued freedom of action for their country in the future. An observer cannot fail to be impressed by the discernment shown during those first weeks.

✓ The federation with Jordan was most easily disposed of, partly owing to King Hussein's freely voiced hostility to the republic. On July 15 one of the first Cabinet decisions to be taken by joint deliberation announced Iraq's withdrawal from the Arab Federation, and the annulment of all measures connected with it. The reason given was that the federation had not been "a true union with the interests of the people of both countries as its objective²⁰." An Iraqi army detachment, styled "Hādī Column," had been stationed near Mafrāq in northern Jordan since May as a contribution to Jordanian security. On July 14 this force received orders via Baghdad Radio to return. Its withdrawal was completed along the pipeline highway without encountering physical interference from the host. Later its commander complained that Jordanian officers had subjected him to a "war of nerves" in an effort to subvert his loyalty to the revolution. King Hussein acknowledged the dissolution on August 2.

All other steps in this field were obviously designed to fulfil revolutionary expectations while antagonizing outside forces as little as possible: Western intervention could not yet be completely ruled out as an eventuality.

The session of the Baghdad Pact Council at Istanbul scheduled for July 14 took place without Iraq. For the time being no official renunciation of the pact was forthcoming from Baghdad, but all concerned took it for granted that Iraq had ceased to be a partner.

The question of Iraqi-UAR relations is treated later in more detail. The new regime at Baghdad received a clean bill of health: the republican government was given immediate recognition by the UAR, and enthusiastically welcomed in Cairo and Damascus. On July 19 a Mutual Aid Agreement between the two countries was signed at Damascus and on July 23 the "Voice of Iraq," the clandestine pro-Nasser broadcasting station, was solemnly closed down.

↓ Relations with the communist bloc followed the same pattern. Recognition and declarations of mutual good will were instantaneous. Probably to reassure the West, an announcement in Qassem's name stressed that resumption of relations with the Soviet Union, severed by Iraq three years earlier, was a continuation and not a revolutionary precedent:

²⁰ The news was first announced as a "Cabinet proclamation" by Baghdad Radio close on midnight, interrupting its programme (*R. Baghdad*, July 15 [17], 1958).

the thread was merely being taken up from where it had snapped. At the same time the Chinese People's Republic was recognized, "in view of her friendly attitude towards the Iraqi Republic."

On July 18 Qassem issued a statement on oil policy. The republican government would honour its obligations; but it would "work for preservation of supreme national interests," "hoping that those concerned would respond to its desire for the continued utilization of this vital resource for the good of the national as well as the international economy." Clearly, the Prime Minister wished it to be known abroad that no Mosaddeq had risen in Iraq. As clearly, he wished it to be known at home that he would not waive any national demands.

It is certain that no military intervention was contemplated by the West, with the exception, for some brief hours, at Ankara²¹. No sanctions were introduced. On August 1 Britain recognized the republic, two days after a solemn memorial service for Fayṣal, 'Abdul Ilāh and Nuri had been held in London in the Queen's Chapel of the Savoy. On August 2 the United States followed suit. On August 7 the new representative of Iraq at the United Nations, Hāshim Jawād, assumed his place.

It is difficult to say what other course the Western powers could have adopted, but Qassem's conciliatory attitude undoubtedly helped to smooth the path to peaceful recognition.

²¹ Robinson, R. D., *The First Turkish Republic*, Cambridge, Mass., 1963, p. 187.

CHAPTER 4 THE SOCIAL PROMISE

During the first months of its life the revolutionary regime endeavoured to fulfil the promises of social reform implicit in its claims to have delivered the nation from a ruling clique which stood for stagnation, selfishness, injustice and corruption. A harvest of socio-economic and socio-political measures renders this period in retrospect the golden age of the Qassem era.

ḤADĪD'S STATEMENT

Within a fortnight of the revolution Muḥammad Ḥadīd, Minister of Finance and deputy chairman of the National Democratic Party, defined the general economic policy of the government¹. As befitted a student of Harold Laski he envisaged it within the context of a general social policy: "The general economic policy of the government would be along the lines of a welfare state."

Measures for the reform of taxation would be introduced. Income tax would be more equitably graded, and the widespread evasion formerly practised would be stopped: one of the scandals of the previous regime had been that the rich could actually chase the tax official from their doorsteps with impunity. The agricultural sector, which so far had escaped direct taxation altogether, would in future be expected to shoulder its fair share of the burden. Provisions for a land tax would be considered. In the interests of social justice, and to lay the foundations for a stable society, taxation would be directed towards reducing inequalities in incomes and raising living standards. Indirect taxation, which bore heavily on the poor, would certainly be reduced. Some measure of economic planning was proposed. Capital would be guided into more useful channels. Quick-return investment in real estate would be discouraged and limitations would probably be set on the building of monumental office blocks and similar objects of speculation.

Industry, which on the whole had remained on a very small scale, would receive greater fiscal protection where necessary in order to raise home

¹ *Mid. Mir.*, July 22, 1958.

production to the highest possible level. Thus protected, a more profitable home industry could be expected to have greater attractions now that investors were deflected from land and building, which had hitherto absorbed the bulk of their funds. With the emphasis on home production, imports would be limited to goods for which the domestic supply was inadequate². Essential imports would be given priority and luxuries might have to be cut. The development envisaged was firmly based on oil sales and grain exports; long-range economic policy would be expansionist with a parallel increase in imports.

Hadid's was an ambitious statement. A striking feature is his confidence that the state was capable of ordering the national economy to the implied extent. It cannot be claimed, of course, that the concept as a whole was original. In particular, the close resemblance to the economic thinking in Cairo and Damascus during the same period should be noted as well as the similarity of the difficulties involved.

GENERAL WELFARE MEASURES

The leading personalities of the new regime were untiring in their declarations that the revolution had been initiated in order to bring justice and security to all. Particular evils were diagnosed and remedies proposed, with urgency and evident sincerity. The attitude displayed by the leaders augmented the optimism of the post-revolutionary atmosphere³.

A few practical measures taken towards realization of the Welfare State should be mentioned.

The Board of Social Services was enlarged to include additional ministries.

The Social Security Law of 1956 was said to be strictly enforced for the first time. The law applied to undertakings with more than thirty employees. It provided for a compulsory savings scheme to which government and employers contributed the lion's share.

The Mortgage Bank was empowered to grant easier loan facilities to wage earners.

Under the Rent Control Law ceilings were appreciably lowered and the landlord's power to evict was restricted.

² Hadid's particular concern for industrial development may be legitimately explained by his position as a leading Iraqi industrialist.

³ The measures taken or resolved are extensively treated in *Revolution*, I, pp. 169-199, 309-14, and 318-47.

A start was made on popular housing projects, financed by public bodies. Particular attention was promised to the *sarifa* conglomerations on the outskirts of the cities where the displaced peasants were living.

New regulations affecting income tax as well as indirect and municipal taxation, designed to relieve the lower income groups, were issued.

Price controls on foodstuffs were introduced, and merchants demanding excess profits were threatened with "strong measures."

Other measures aimed at the relief of particular groups:

Salaries of government employees earning up to ID 10 per month were raised by ID 2.

The industrial worker was attended to. On July 27 Qassem announced a Cabinet decision that the working day would be reduced from nine to eight hours, with increased pay for overtime. In the past employees were often expected to work from dawn to dusk for a day's wages, despite the existing official limitation.

An inspection system covering industrial establishments was inaugurated.

The Minister of Social Affairs was empowered to establish regional labour exchanges where employers were instructed to register their vacancies; this measure was speedily carried out in various parts of the country.

The Ministry of Social Affairs was empowered to establish institutions for orphans, destitute and disabled children, and juvenile delinquents. The supervision of similar institutions not under its direct control also became the responsibility of the ministry.

All prison sentences were reduced by one-fifth. Shortly afterwards the chaining and whipping of prisoners were abolished.

A Law to Fight Prostitution imposed particularly heavy prison sentences on procurers, and ordered the establishment of compulsory rehabilitation centres for prostitutes.

THE AGRARIAN SCENE

Whereas the general welfare measures described cannot for all their worth be called revolutionary, in the agrarian sector the new regime took steps designed to change Iraqi society from its fundamentals.

On July 27, the day when the Provisional Constitution was published,

the government abolished the tribal jurisdictions⁴. With this measure the legal basis for "feudalism" in Iraq was destroyed. Symbolic of the transmutation was the decision of the Cabinet, announced on August 6, to change the names of Muntafiq province to Nasiriya and of Dulaim province to Ramadi, the seats of government. These two provinces had so far been called after the tribal confederations which had exerted great influence on the social and economic life of the regions.

By September 30, 1958, the Agrarian Reform Law had been approved. In the meantime, the Minister of Agriculture ordered as an interim measure the strict enforcement of a 1952 law which fixed the maximum payment in kind that the peasant tenant might make to the landowner at 50 per cent of his crop⁵.

The main provisions of the Agrarian Reform Law, as first published, were as follows:

Chapter I imposed limitations on the size of agricultural holdings, and regulated redistribution of the resultant excess lands.

Holdings were restricted to the possession of 1,000 dunums for agricultural land irrigated by free flow or by artificial means, and to 2,000 dunums for agricultural land irrigated by rainfall, or to a proportional combination where both types of land were held. The term "possession" included the various categories of long-term tenure.

The expropriation of excess lands would begin with the largest estates. Landowners were enjoined to exploit their land properly pending expropriation.

Compensation was to be paid for the land expropriated according to its value. Valuation committees would be set up having a judge as chairman. The compensation would be paid in 3 per cent government bonds redeemable within twenty years.

The redistribution would normally be made in parcels of not less than 30 dunums and not greater than 60 dunums for land irrigated by free

⁴ This measure was followed up in the Baghdad Penal Code Amendment Law, 1961 (*WI*, Feb. 23, 1961). The amendment abrogated a provision which enabled the court to consider the observance of tribal custom as a mitigating circumstance. A contemporary comment was, "Although the judiciary never applied [the abrogated provision of the code] its inclusion in the code is inconsistent with the aims of the revolution" (*IT*, Feb. 26, 1961).

⁵ *IT*, Aug. 6; *R. Baghdad*, Aug. 8 [11], 1958.

flow or artificial means, and of 60 and 120 dunums respectively for rain-irrigated land.

The beneficiaries of the distribution were to be practising farmers.

The beneficiary would pay for the land in accordance with the estimation of the valuation committee; an additional 20 per cent of the value was to be paid in order to defray expenses of distribution and compensation, plus an annual interest of 3 per cent, the whole to be paid off in equal instalments over twenty years.

A Higher Committee of Agrarian Reform was established with the Prime Minister as chairman. The committee's interpretation of the Agrarian Reform Law was to be final.

The process of expropriation and redistribution under the law was to be completed within five years.

Chapter II dealt with the establishment of agricultural cooperative societies.

Chapter III regulated the relationship between the landowner and the peasant tenant.

It specified that all contracts were to be in writing, to be concluded directly between the landowner or his agent and the peasant, and were to remain in force over a period of no less than three years. The tenant could not be evicted, and means of irrigation could not be withheld, unless he was proved to be seriously remiss in his obligations. Crop distribution between the parties was fixed in detail. A deviation from the specified distribution in favour of the peasant was permissible. From the percentages laid down, it would appear that the peasant's share would reach 55-60 per cent of the total crop.

Chapter IV was directed to ameliorate conditions for the agricultural labourer.

Minimum wages for the agricultural labourer were to be fixed yearly for the various agricultural districts by a committee appointed by the Minister of Agriculture. The chairman of the committee was to be a senior official of the ministry; two of its members would represent the landowners, and two the agricultural labourers. The committee's decisions were to be approved by the minister. Agricultural labourers would be permitted to "form unions to defend their common interests."

The Peasants Rights and Duties Law of 1933 was repealed.

Out of an estimated 48 million dunums of cultivable land in Iraq, the law was at first believed to have created about 8 million dunums of excess lands in private holding⁶. On the basis of more exact surveys the excess lands were estimated in 1964 at 11.3 million dunums, in the possession of about 2,800 persons. An additional 6.2 million dunums in government or disputed possession were also earmarked for distribution⁷. The total area of land subject to redistribution under the Agrarian Reform Law of 1958 and its later amendments—which did not alter its basic provisions—was therefore 17.5 million dunums, or rather more than one-third of the cultivable area of Iraq.

When Qassem introduced the law over the radio, on September 30, he said: "We have found that agrarian reform is the foundation of social reform." The law was aimed at turning the peasants into landowners; nevertheless, Qassem reassured the "large number of members of the middle class" that their lands would not be touched, whereas the great owners would receive "a just compensation" for the expropriation entailed. It was on this occasion that Qassem "proudly recorded the end of feudalism in Iraq."

A more detailed analysis of objectives was given by Hudayb al-Hājj Hmūd, the Minister of Agriculture. Tracing the conceptual origins of the law to the French Revolution, he explained that hitherto practical attempts to introduce agrarian reform in Iraq had foundered because of the interest of previous regimes in furthering "feudalism" as "a strong imperialist asset." The primary aim of the present law, therefore, was to destroy the power concentrated in the hands of the great landowners. The next important considerations were to raise the standard of living of the majority and to improve agricultural production. Promotion of the cooperative system would "guarantee the introduction of scientific and technical production methods." The compensation paid to landowners was intended to be used for investment in the remaining lands. The provisions dealing with the agricultural labourer were aimed at "encouraging cash transactions," i.e., they were designed to curb the truck system, which was one of the banes of his life.

The minister went beyond Qassem in dwelling on the choice that lay before the great landowners: they could either become "good citizens" or incur the people's "anger and hatred," together with "severest penalties."

⁶ *Revolution*, I, pp. 73, 75.

⁷ *Al-iṣlāḥ al-zirāʿī fī aʿwāmihi al-sitta*, Baghdad [1964], p. 123.

Another use for land expropriated under the Agrarian Reform Law contemplated by the government was the resettlement of Baghdad's slum dwellers⁸.

Three days before publication of the law in Iraq, on September 27, Abdel Nasser had announced the Agrarian Reform Law of Syria. It would be difficult to compare the two without looking into the differing agrarian systems of the two countries. However, it is fair to observe that while the Syrian Agrarian Reform Law was more elastic in its provisions, the Iraqi law was more liberal to landlords; even this generalization must be qualified since the Syrian law specified the compensation to be paid for the expropriated lands, while the Iraqi law left this thorny question to be resolved by the valuation committees yet to be set up.

* * *

While legislation was proceeding in Baghdad to lay the new foundations for the rural society of Iraq, at least part of this task was unexpectedly accomplished over wide tracts of the country by direct action. During the late summer and autumn of 1958, something resembling a *Grande Peur* swept the provinces of Kut and Amara and affected other areas. In a spontaneous movement, which appears to have sprung up without organization or known leaders, the peasants stormed, looted and burned down the residences of the big landlords. Accounts and rent-rolls were destroyed; the agents and overseers chased away. The erstwhile sharecroppers took over the machinery and settled down as owners. The acres hitherto tilled on behalf of the landlord were divided up by the sharecroppers and landless labourers in rough and ready fashion. There seems to have been little bloodshed, though much destruction of property. The majority of the landlords were absentees; others fled. The peasants were abetted by local communists, but these did not initiate the movement.

The area thus appropriated has been estimated at 1.1 million dunums (about 680,000 acres)⁹. The Rabi'a "amirs" of Kut evidently suffered the highest losses. They were the greatest landowners in the country, related to the former royal family through 'Abdul Ilāh's wife.

Attempts were made by the government to arrest the movement by persuasion, and then by threats of punishment¹⁰. Force was not used,

⁸ *Mid. Mir.*, Oct. 12; *IT*, Oct. 19, 1958.

⁹ Al-Salti, "Land Reform in the UAR, Syria and Iraq," *World Marxist Review*, July 1965, p. 55.

¹⁰ e.g., the Military Governor General's proclamations of September 4 and October 20, 1958 (*R. Baghdad*, Sept. 4 [6], Oct. 20 [22], 1958).

however, and the *fait accompli* was accepted. This movement probably hastened enactment of the Agrarian Reform Law¹¹. Production naturally suffered but the efforts of the authorities through the incipient agrarian reform machinery, and the efforts of the communists through the peasants societies, as yet not legalized (see below, pp. 124-5), forestalled disaster.

* * *

In sum the social and socio-economic awareness of the new regime gave rise to an impressive legislative crop during the first months of the revolution. Whether these far-reaching reforms were practicable, and how far the regime would adhere to its resolution to implement them, will be noticed in later chapters.

¹¹ I.N. Garshin, "The ICP in the Struggle for the National Independence and Democratic Development of Iraq," *Bor'ba Naradov Protive Kolonializma*, Moscow, 1965; quoted *Mizan*, Oct. 1965, p. 11.

CHAPTER 5 THE VIEWS AND BELIEFS OF QASSEM

While the new regime was exerting its powers to achieve social and economic reforms, what can be learned of the man who had become the key figure of the revolution?

As previously indicated, Qassem was chary of committing himself in advance to definite, much less to controversial, policies respecting the future Republic of Iraq. This restraint also characterized the first weeks after the revolution. However, gathering clouds, probably in conjunction with a newly released urge for self-expression, soon induced Qassem to make his views and beliefs public.

The basic theme propounded by Qassem between the beginning of August and Aref's arrest on November 4 was never to vary in its essentials. Elaborations, and shifts in phrasing and emphasis to accord with the exigencies of the hour, are often of great interest. However, the fundamental principles can readily be distinguished, underscored by his personal method of delivery.

"Sons of my homeland and of my people, I see on your faces freedom, dignity and prestige," Qassem welcomed one of the first delegations to troop to his office at the Defence Ministry after the revolution, "I am the son of the people,...I shall offer my life for the Iraqi Republic...[so that] corruption, tyranny and exploitation shall not return¹." To another delegation he said, "We are brought together by one aim, to serve our republic, with confident and liberated hearts... The past generations suffered humiliation and insults. We of the present generation have managed to remove that disgrace by the proclamation of the republic²."

Reflection shows that his thinking rested on two assumptions: that there was indeed an "Iraqi people" to whom the inhabitants of the state were prepared to dedicate their loyalties; and that the postulated nation saw Qassem as he saw himself. Qassem regarded these twin assumptions as axiomatic, basic to every issue requiring settlement.

¹ *R. Baghdad*, Aug. 5 [7], 1958.

² *R. Baghdad*, Sept. 2 [4], 1958.

What was the superstructure to be erected on this foundation? It must be recalled that Qassem was addressing a population flagrantly divided against itself. Passionate exhortation was necessary to remind it, not only of the unique identity which Qassem invariably took for granted, but of the imperative need for unity. "Bury your feuds" was a cry to recur from the earliest days of the coup. Qassem's reasoning was dominated by constructive rather than defensive considerations:

With the dawn of the new era, there remained pressing promises to fulfil, and formidable new tasks lay ahead to challenge every Iraqi citizen. As Qassem saw it, the revolution itself had eliminated the bitter grievances of the past harboured by the Kurd and the Christian, the worker and the peasant, the nationalist, the socialist and the liberal, the teacher of Islam, the student; joyous cooperation lay ahead. "The classes of the people have merged," Qassem explained to a reporter from *Izvestia*³.

A corollary to the concept of unity and rebirth was that of atonement, tolerance and forgiveness. "Be tolerant with your brethren," Qassem entreated the peasants, workers and Kurds, "may God pardon the past, humans err." As the skies darkened, the appeal became more strident.

Qassem's belief in the purifying nature of the revolution is remarkable: "We will not persecute landlords or treat them unjustly. We will only awake their conscience towards the sons of this people, and they will march alongside the caravan of liberation and equality. Our aim is to eradicate greed." "Exercise tolerance ... even with the people who have done you harm. We do not hold the son responsible for the crime of his father because the children of the present will form the good generation of the near future." "We shall always be tolerant, even towards the evil-doers of the past regime, because past situations differ from the present." "We must have patience and endurance ..." "To bring all the evil men of the deposed regime to account ... would prove fruitless ... [All those except the principals] will find the right way of life for themselves when they see their mistakes in the light of reality ..." "The small must respect the big and the big must cherish the small, so that we may form one unit serving one aim⁴."

Qassem was haunted by the poverty in Iraq. His sincerity cannot be doubted. Eight months after his accession to power he told reserve officers: "If you go and tour any part of the country you will see how widespread are misery, poverty and want in the life of the people. You will see in the shacks or near the marshes moving skeletons⁵..." Social justice and a

³ *R. Baghdad*, Sept. 29 [Oct. 1], 1958.

⁴ *R. Baghdad*, Sept. 3 [5], 1958.

⁵ *IT*, March 3, 1959. The comparatively later date of this quotation does not weaken its message. On the contrary, the time lapse gives it point: eight months

higher standard of living were main objectives of the revolution. Both, in Qassem's mind, were closely linked to freedom and dignity. "We have come to solve the nation's problems in a way that will ensure the common weal, welfare and a high standard of living for all," "...suppression, ignorance and deprivation—we are working to eliminate these factors. We hope to enable the people to live free, respectably and civilized..." He promised that the advance would not be made at the expense of other strata of population: "We will not lower the standard of the rich, but we will raise the standard of the poor." It is in keeping with such urges that Qassem was apt to commit himself to concrete, but manifestly unrealistic, promises, in which intention was mingled with achievement: "Within one year," he had announced, "no Iraqi province will be without electricity." Or else, "the Agrarian Reform Law is a revolution within a revolution ... agrarian reform will ensure stability ... we have increased the landholdings of the poor," when the proposed reform was as yet only a law in the Official Gazette⁶.

The concept of national unity through revolutionary rebirth also determined Qassem's attitude towards the minority groups. He offered complete equality of rights; but under Iraqi conditions, and on his own interpretation, equality stood for assimilation of the varying groups to vanishing point. A Kurdish delegation was reminded at the outset that the Kurds "were an indivisible part of the Iraqi people". "Our Kurdish brothers have lived with us for thousands of years, our blood was mixed in this pure land fighting together against the foreigner, Kurds and Arabs have intermarried," a reasoning which could easily be extended to become a denial of Kurdish nationhood. In this connection, Qassem again treated the revolution as an end in itself: "The elements of division have vanished ... we have only to live as one happy family in this great house, our nascent republic". If there were any lingering doubts, the Provisional Constitution could be invoked: "We are all partners in this country, as stipulated in our Provisional Constitution." "I want you to rid yourselves of any elements of division or rancour which may still exist among the northern tribes from former movements ... Let your slogan be 'friendship and brotherhood with everyone' in order that we may raise the intellectual, physical and social standards of the people⁷." Qassem evidently expected

after the accession to power, it would have been more usual to overlook such unpalatable facts.

⁶ *R. Baghdad*, Oct. 24 [27], 1958.

⁷ *R. Baghdad*, Sept. 18 [20], 1958; the spokesman of the delegation was Jalāl Ṭalabānī.

the adjurative "I want you" to carry weight with "the elements of division" among the Kurdish tribes. At the same meeting with the Kurdish delegation, Qassem repeated his cordial invitation to Mullā Muṣṭafā Barzani to return and share in the general harmony. About the Kurdish grievances and aspirations, and the political, administrative, economic, and educational problems yet to be solved, he said not a word.

Christian representatives were addressed in the same vein, although Qassem's effusion was less likely to lead to speedy disappointment in this case: "Our ancestors, brothers, lived in this country before Christianity and Islam ever entered it. We were always brethren then, living together through thick and thin ..." "...the 14th of July has put an end to the rule of tyrants and laid the foundations of justice, freedom and fraternity: no discrimination between communities and races [will be tolerated. There will be] equal rights for all individuals ... in order to achieve our aim—the well-being of the people⁸."

The largest "minority" group was not forgotten: women's rights were sacred. "Men and women are equal in rights and duties in every aspect of true democratic life⁹."

Qassem's official attitude towards Islam was consistent with his customary treatment of a difficult or dangerous problem he found desirable to skirt. Islam was the faith of the overwhelming majority of the population; it was the state religion according to the Provisional Constitution. Most important, its dignitaries were capable of making or breaking the loyalties of an excitable segment of the population. Qassem's outlook was decidedly secular, but he did not wish to estrange major formers of public opinion. He was not without religious sentiment, if finding it difficult to represent that as positive conformance to Islam. He therefore resorted to pious generalizations interspersed with occasional veiled warnings. Addressing a delegation of 'Ulamā', he said, "My brothers, men of religion, I ... ask God to keep you for the people ... God bears witness to what I say because you are God's good men who always guide the people spiritually and morally to what is right," adding to this the rider, "particularly because you are liberal in your thoughts, behaviour and guidance." "God will help and guide us, and protect us from the seduction of Satan. By God's guidance will we march forward." "We must work to foster the morale and morals of the people in order that we may raise a generation with strong morals, a generation which believes in God, itself and its country ... I request you, brothers, as sincere men, to unite the voice of the people and promote their religious education

⁸ *R. Baghdad*, Sept. 10 [12], 1958.

⁹ *R. Baghdad*, Sept. 23 [25], 1958.

by your guidance; we for our part will endeavour to raise health, cultural and social standards ..." Qassem's inclusion of himself among "the orthodox" was also pertinent: "Our duty will be to guide the deviators to the orthodox path, and *not* to inflict punishment on them." He was not sparing in promises: "I am ready to meet all your demands regarding mosques and centres for religious guidance and culture ... I will not forget the *waqfs*; we will try to make use of their income by expending it on the establishments for which the *waqfs* have been established." To some of the *waqf* beneficiaries among the men of religion the latter qualification may have had an ominous ring¹⁰.

Qassem reiterated the disinterestedness of his motives in assuming leadership: "I am no dictator." Once the period of transition was over, "life in the country will be truly democratic." Qassem did not commit himself to a date when this could be expected. The precondition was that internal stability should be safely secured, "when confidence and peace of mind will prevail¹¹." Presumably the impetus for change was to derive from the people themselves, "the source of all power ... who will express their decisive views when time is ripe." A plebiscite to determine the form of government was repeatedly promised by Qassem at an early date.

"The present government is above party politics or sympathies. It considers all citizens as mobilized in the service of the republic"—thus was expressed another basic principle to which Qassem consistently adhered. If the regime was to be considered impartial, would party life be permitted? This would be resumed after the transition period. Qassem made light of incipient danger from the communists and their vocal supporters. "We consider all sons of this people enlisted in the service of this country and *the defence of the Iraqi Republic* but biased [i.e. communist] propaganda does not affect us" (present author's italics)¹².

Considering the central role it had played in the *coup d'état*, the army was treated rather shabbily. Its cooperation had been essential in bringing about the revolution: "The people had expended their energy on a number of unsuccessful risings"—enumerated by Qassem on another occasion as "the revolution of 1920 and the national uprisings which followed in 1936, 1941, 1948, 1952 and 1956". "... For this reason the army had no alternative but to mix with the people and realize the revolution¹³." But no defini-

¹⁰ *R. Baghdad*, Sept. 14 [18], 1958.

¹¹ e.g., *R. Baghdad*, Sept. 14 [18], 1958.

¹² *R. Baghdad*, Oct. 18 [20], 1958.

¹³ *R. Baghdad*, Aug. 14 [16]; Oct. 18 [20], 1958.

tion was forthcoming of the part the army might be expected to take in guiding the nation through the transition period, at least. The army had been an indispensable instrument in smashing the old regime; once this had been accomplished, there was no further place for the Free Officer's junta, which had throughout the period hid its light under the designation "the army."

Determination of constitutional questions was inextricably linked with accession to the UAR. Qassem's earliest speeches refer to the "eternal Iraqi Republic¹⁴." On the other hand, he did not specify boundaries to a future political affiliation between the two countries. On the contrary, his position could be interpreted as entirely positive: "We do not care for formalities, words or names ... we seek full cooperation between Arab states in all fields ..." "The Arabs are one nation, and cooperation between Iraq and the other Arab states will take place on a wider scale, and this is what matters¹⁵." In the context of the time, however, this was tantamount to negation of the widely held principle of union. The term "cooperation" was substituted for "unity"; he referred to "the Arab states" rather than particularizing the Arab state claiming its unique position within Arab nationalism; even his use of the inclusive expression "in all fields" diminished the effect by making a concession out of what in the eyes of pan-Arab nationalists was a matter of course. Thus to call the Arabs "one nation", without mentioning political unification, meant refuting the idea in practice. Later, the UAR was singled out for "special cooperation" in reply to the increasing probings of journalists into "relations with Abdel Nasser". "Our brother Abdel Nasser" was early lauded in measured terms; but, significantly, for his part in the Egyptian revolution and not on account of his present position in the Arab world¹⁶.

Qassem told a British visitor that there were "elder and younger brothers" in the Arab family¹⁷; it is clear from the context that Egypt was not considered the first-born. Sometimes Qassem elaborated on his affection for "all" Arab states. His real support of the Algerian FLN, a constant principle of his foreign policy, was accorded soon after his accession to power; even Hashimite Jordan was mentioned with casual good will, or at least without malice.

When expressing himself on the subject of Palestine, Qassem conformed to the usual attitude of Arab statesmen, although it is possible to read

¹⁴ *R. Baghdad*, Aug. 4 [6], 1958.

¹⁵ *R. Baghdad*, Aug. 22 [25], 1958.

¹⁶ *R. Baghdad*, Aug. 14 [16], 1958.

¹⁷ Roy Jenkins, M.P. (*R. Baghdad*, Oct. 18 [20], 1958).

between the lines an absence of keenness with which he was to be occasionally charged: "Israel's aggression continues. Despite this we shall not decide anything about the Palestine question before fully studying the situation with the Arab states and taking notice of developments at the United Nations ...¹⁸."

Iraq's foreign policy Qassem described as absolute non-alignment. No interference would be permitted; aid without strings would be welcomed from any source, and would be actively sought; the sole arbiter of foreign policy was the national interest. Iraq would be "neutral", "peaceful" and "sincerely in search of friendship from all the peoples of the world." The Eastern bloc was rarely mentioned by Qassem while diplomatic and other relations were being established or re-established.

His reiterated professions of friendship for the West were couched less ambiguously than usual: "We are sure that we shall remain friends with the West ..." "When we befriend someone now [i.e., the Eastern bloc countries], we do not forget our old friends ... I have visited Britain and have noticed that the British people desire to live in peace and friendship ..." "The Iraqi people remember help received in the past ..." Whether this was to be considered genuine or not, Qassem forestalled possible criticism from the West with the commonsense wisdom that even "pleasant words have their effect¹⁹."

In strong contrast to Abdel Nasser and Aref, Qassem was an anti-imperialist devoid of the crusading spirit. He was not manifestly interested in the character of the regime currently in control at Amman or Riyadh, Teheran or Ankara. At a press conference, Qassem said that "Jordan's appeal for military aid from foreign or friendly countries was her own internal affair²⁰." This was an astounding admission at a time when even the senate of so remote a country as Sudan had unanimously condemned British landings in Jordan in July 1958²¹. Qassem's frequent exhortations to Iraqi audiences from the autumn of 1958 onwards to be on guard against "imperialist" intrigue in order to preserve the liberty of Iraq and prevent division among her people must be understood in the context of the movement for "Unity now" then rapidly reaching a crisis.

¹⁸ *R. Baghdad*, Sept. 14 [16], 1958.

¹⁹ *R. Baghdad*, Oct. 18 [20], 1958.

²⁰ *Mid. Mir.*, Aug. 3, 1958.

²¹ *Mid. Mir.*, July 27, 1958.

CHAPTER 6 THE PROSPECT OF "UNITY NOW"

The Arab nationalists—*qawmiyyūn*—represented one of the main trends in political opinion in Iraq under Qassem. The basic tenet from which they never wavered was identification of themselves as Arabs—their *urūba*. This they felt to be the essence of their political existence, rather than their citizenship, their creed, or any other connection which might otherwise have claimed their prime allegiance. Since 1955, their belief in Arab identity meant that they were drawn to Gamal Abdel Nasser, the central figure of the Arab world, although by no means all of them were ready to carry their loyalty to the extreme conclusion of pressing for "full Unity now" (*wahda fawriyya kāmila*) with the UAR. In the situation as it shortly developed in Iraq after the revolution, their attitude towards Qassem, therefore, was soon tempered with coolness at best.

* * *

Grievances against the old regime had been advanced from many quarters and on many grounds. However, when the monarchy finally fell, opinion in the Middle East and throughout the West was unanimous that pan-Arab nationalism under the leadership of Abdel Nasser had been the main lever that had toppled it. This consensus can in part be attributed to the vehemence of Cairo-led propaganda which stirred the longings and frustrations of the Arabic-speaking public as never before or since; in part it echoed the openly uttered apprehensions of the Iraqi rulers themselves, even their own premonitions¹. It also must have been based on accounts emanating from Iraq which dwelt on Abdel Nasser's popularity in the country.

There was a difference between holding Abdel Nasser responsible for the Iraqi revolution and expecting the speedy accession of Iraq to the UAR

¹ e.g., the address of Fādīl al-Jamālī, the last Foreign Minister of the monarchy, at the UN Security Council on June 11, 1958 (*The Times*, June 12, 1958), and Nuri's so-called "Last Testament" (*Life International*, Aug. 18, 1958). Although the latter document purports to warn the West of "a communist coup next time," it is clearly the fear of Abdel Nasser which influenced the author.

in consequence. All the same, the link was obvious, not least to the protagonists themselves. The attraction exerted by Nasserism was the first of the challenges to confront the leadership.

Early reports from revolutionary Baghdad enhanced the impression that a merger with the UAR was pending. One of the first political commentators to broadcast from the capital, on July 14, described the rising as "part of the great revolution of the Arab peoples who were led and liberated from oppression and corruption by President Abdel Nasser." Abdel Nasser was quoted as having said, "We shall act, from the Persian Gulf to the Atlantic." On the morning of the same day cries "We are your soldiers, Gamal Abdel Nasser" were clearly relayed over Baghdad Radio² while "the whole population of Baghdad" was described as being out in the streets shouting, "One Arab people, one Arab army, one Arab struggle," and "Gamal the Giant³." The placards carried about the streets of the capital and the slogans daubed on the walls were pro-Nasser in spirit, if not in wording—"One nation," "No frontiers," "The people's hero—Gamal Abdel Nasser." Immediately after the coup a tank was parading through Baghdad with a picture of Abdel Nasser prominently foisted in front⁴.

Other indications that unity was imminent were not lacking: there was immediate cooperation between Baghdad Radio and the clandestine "Voice of Iraq⁵," and broadcasters from Cairo and Damascus spoke over the Baghdad network. On yet a higher level was the inclusion in the Cabinet of known UAR supporters, such as Dr. Jābir 'Umar, who returned to Baghdad from his Damascus exile on the day of the revolution, and Fu'ād al-Rikābī. Hashim Jawād, the newly appointed Iraqi representative at the United Nations, was quoted by Cairo sources as having said in Damascus on July 17, on his way to New York, that he "had no doubt that all Arab countries would shortly unite in one state, and that the Republic of Iraq believed this was the aim of every Arab⁶." At the same time it was stated in Cairo that Qassem would meet Abdel Nasser in the near future⁷.

² *SWB*, July 15, 1958 (editorial comment).

³ *Mid. Mir.*, July 20, 1958. When appreciating the pro-Nasser enthusiasm of the first days of the revolution, it must be remembered that the name of 'Abd al-Karīm Qassem was unknown to the general public, and as likely unknown to the announcer who gave the description quoted here.

⁴ *NYT*, July 21, 1958 (photograph). Qassem's picture also appears on the photograph.

⁵ *SWB*, July 18, 1958 (editorial comment).

⁶ *R. Cairo*, July 17—*IMB*, July 18, 1958.

⁷ *Akhbār*, Cairo, July 20, 1958.

Official gestures—such as the renaming of King Fayṣal Street, a main thoroughfare of Baghdad on the West Bank, after Gamal Abdel Nasser—could also be regarded as a portent⁸.

The mass processions displaying outsize portraits of Abdel Nasser and calling for *wahda fawriyya* were to be a daily sight in the streets of Baghdad for weeks after the revolution. Their presence was generally thought to be proof of Ba'th party activity. In fact, Ba'th membership at the time was hardly numerous enough, or sufficiently well organized, to do more than provide the cheer-leaders.

As important an authority as Aḥmad Sa'īd, the director and leading commentator of the Cairo "Voice of the Arabs," asserted that "complete Arab unity" was a "defined target" of the new regime⁹. It was a grotesque misunderstanding of the new Iraqi leader's intentions, but who was then in a position to interpret them?

Qassem's action to dampen the enthusiasm of the crowds seems to have been confined to warnings administered by his Military Governor General. Proclamations were issued by 'Abdī at set intervals forbidding the spreading of slogans, leaflets and photographs "giving rise to dissension"¹⁰. However, in Qassem's estimation, the crucial danger to Iraqi independence, and probably to his now position, lay with the Arab nationalists higher up the scale.

* * *

If no sharp picture emerges of the Iraqi Ba'th Party during these months, three reasons can be given: in the mind of the public the party was largely synonymous with the general movement for "Unity now;" like the communists, the Ba'th leaders preferred to keep the details of its structure and their identity concealed, but unlike the communists they made no calculated efforts to infiltrate the press and professional organizations; the party soon came under a cloud and could no longer work openly, even had its leaders decided that they would do so.

Before the revolution the Ba'th had developed a skeleton organization of local cells and district headquarters with a regional command at Baghdad. There is no evidence that an essential change took place afterwards, although membership at nationalist centres certainly increased considerably.

⁸ Abdel Nasser Street was quietly changed to *Shāri' al-Mathāf* (Museum Street) in the spring of 1959. Today it is Abdel Nasser Street again.

⁹ *R. Cairo*, July 15 [17], 1958.

¹⁰ e.g., *R. Baghdad*, July 19—*IMB*, July 20; *I.T.*, Sept. 2, 15, 1958.

The party developed a para-military body, the nucleus of the Nationalist Guard of 1963, under an army intelligence officer, Maj. Ṣāliḥ Maḥdī 'Ammāsh, the future Ba'thi Minister of Defence. In practice, however, these storm troops were little better than nationalist-orientated street gangs, and they never constituted a counterweight to the communist-dominated Popular Resistance Force.

The composition of the Ba'th regional command at Baghdad was never officially published. From the date of the revolution until the attempt on Qassem's life in October 1959 the following were probably members: Fu'ād al-Rikābī (secretary-general); Ḥāzim Jawād, his cousin; 'Abdallah al-Rikābī; Maḥdat Jum'a; Ayād Sa'id Thābit; Khālīd 'Alī al-Dulaymī; Karīm Maḥmūd; Ṭālib Ḥusayn Shabīb; 'Alī Ṣāliḥ al-Sa'dī; and Fayṣal Ḥabīb al-Khayzarān.

The Ba'th published its own organ, the daily *al-Jumhūriyya*. The paper was first issued on July 17, by the Military Intelligence Department, with Aref named as publisher. After about a week Aref turned it over to the Ba'th. Without official authorization of the political parties, its allegiance to the Ba'th could not be openly acknowledged but *al-Jumhūriyya* never concealed the connection, and carried the Ba'th motto "Unity, Freedom, Socialism" beneath its masthead. The paper was published by a former army officer, Rashīd Fāliḥ, with Dr. Sa'dūn Ḥamādī as chief editor. At first the Ba'th unreservedly lauded the government, in which it saw Aref, its champion and protector, as the central figure. As Aref's position visibly declined, the voice of the party became subdued and apologetic, eager to smooth out "misunderstandings." By September *al-Jumhūriyya* was admitting shortcomings in discipline and selflessness among its supporters, and called for full cooperation with the revolutionary authorities¹¹. The party was evidently undergoing an agonizing reappraisal of its position vis-a-vis the regime.

Ten days after the revolution, on July 24, Michel 'Aflaq, secretary-general of the Ba'th national command and the party's co-founder and ideologist, visited Baghdad. 'Aflaq pressed for immediate union with the UAR; he was also undoubtedly motivated by the wish to strengthen the position of the Ba'th opposite Abdel Nasser which this consummation would entail. The mission met with the failure that 'Aflaq usually encountered in his excursions into practical politics. Little prominence was given to his visit either in Baghdad or in Cairo and Damascus, although for different reasons.

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¹¹ *Jumhūriyya—IT*, Sept. 3, 16, 1958.

During the three months following the revolution, evidence of cooperation between Iraq and the UAR was manifested in many directions, often flamboyantly. Neither government stated explicitly that political union was the target, or attempted to set a timetable, but the public was predisposed and encouraged to see advances along the road. If for no other reason, therefore, the more important instances of collaboration between Iraq and the UAR during this period should be mentioned. They cannot be presented as the result of a masterplan; there was none.

The first act of the new regime in the field of foreign affairs was its recognition "with great pride" of the UAR¹². Abdel Nasser reciprocated by declaring that the UAR would regard any attack on the Iraqi Republic as an attack upon herself¹³.

This was followed by the UAR-Iraqi Mutual Aid Pact. On July 19 an Iraqi ministerial delegation headed by Aref went to Damascus to meet Abdel Nasser who had arrived there the previous day from his talks with Khrushchev in Moscow. In the evening the Iraqi delegation appeared with Abdel Nasser and Shukrī al-Quwatli on the balcony of the Guest Palace. Speeches were made stressing Arab unity, and Aref then read out a five-paragraph agreement which had just been signed by Abdel Nasser and himself on behalf of their governments, to come into force immediately. The agreement asserted the solidarity between the two countries and required that "positive and immediate steps be taken" in various fields to ensure cooperation. There were no operational provisions, however, and no measures for unification were directly specified¹⁴: in effect, the practical value of the agreement would depend on the volition of the two parties. The ministerial delegation returned to Baghdad on July 20. Contrary to the speculation which surrounded the Mutual Aid Pact at the time, it may by now be stated with confidence that there were no secret clauses. If Aref showed exuberance when closeted with Abdel Nasser, this did not bind his government¹⁵.

On July 27 Fā'iq al-Sāmarrā'i of the Istiqlāl, one of the best-known advocates of closest collaboration, was appointed Iraqi ambassador to the UAR. In common with the appointment of Col. Amīn as military

¹² *R. Baghdad—IMB*, July 14, 1958.

¹³ *R. Cairo*, July 16 [18], 1958.

¹⁴ *R. Damascus*, July 19 [21], 1958; *Hayāt*, July 20, 1958.

¹⁵ According to rumour, at their Damascus meeting Aref told Abdel Nasser that "for 20 fils" (i.e., for the price of a rifle bullet) he would lead Iraq into the UAR by "settling" Qassem. Abdel Nasser's reaction is said to have been, "What a baby!"

attaché there, it later transpired that the nomination of Sāmarrā'i was a diplomatic removal, but at the time both appointments could only have borne a favourable interpretation by Arab nationalist opinion.

The selection of Amīn's counterpart in Baghdad, Col. 'Abd al-Majīd Farīd, an Egyptian, with the Syrian Lt.-Col. Tal'at Ṣidqī as his assistant, was to prove of greater significance. Both were intelligence officers and reported to Qassem at the Defence Ministry in Baghdad on the day of the revolution complete with wireless sets¹⁶. The new military attachés saw no harm in advertising their presence by accompanying Aref on his circuits. Subsequent disclosures leave no doubt that their duties included the underground furtherance of elements working for the merger of Iraq with the UAR.

A significant gesture of political cooperation on the part of the new regime was the extradition to the UAR of enemies of Abdel Nasser who had found refuge in Iraq. There were Prince Maḥmūd Nāmiq, a member of the former Egyptian royal house, Sa'īd Luṭfī, an Egyptian journalist who had broadcast from Baghdad, and 'Iṣām Murād, a Syrian conspirator. It is worth noting that this act was an infringement of the Provisional Constitution which prohibited expressly the extradition of political refugees.

The republican government also accepted considerable aid from the UAR of the most conspicuous type, in the name of defence. Within a few days after the revolution quantities of small arms, with some artillery and requisite ammunition, arrived in Iraq from the canal zone and northern Syria. Their immediate purpose was to arm a popular resistance force against imperialist invasion. Whether they would serve the establishment of a Greater UAR would depend on other factors.

At the beginning of October a further and even more spectacular contribution to Iraqi defence by the UAR became known. The arrival at Habbaniya air base of a UAR Air Force detachment was reported in the foreign press and later confirmed by Iraqi sources. Its stated purpose was "cooperation with the Iraqi Air Force;" more precisely, it was intended to train Iraqi pilots for the Soviet aircraft soon to arrive. According to an Egyptian daily, the considerable force included two squadrons of Mig-17 fighters. Other sources also spoke of Ilyushin transport planes, anti-aircraft guns, a radar installation, and "a total of two hundred personnel¹⁷."

The postings had been preceded by a fourteen-day visit of an Iraqi military delegation to the UAR during the second half of September. The

¹⁶ *Ahrām*, April 2, 1959.

¹⁷ *Hayāt*, Oct. 3; *Ākhir Sā'a*, Oct. 10, 1958; *Ahrām*, Jan. 27, 1959.

delegation, headed by Col. Muḥsin Ḥusayn al-Ḥabīb, was evidently not of the highest standing and did not receive great publicity, although it was known in Iraq that Ḥabīb was a devoted nationalist¹⁸.

In the fields of economics and finance, the UAR generally assumed the role of mentor and adviser. Conferences were held between the presidents of the two central banks. Egyptian-conceived plans and Egyptian planners were envisaged for the Iraqi Ministry of Development. Dr. Kubba, the Marxist Minister of Economic Affairs, and Brig. Nāḥi Ṭālib, Minister of Social Affairs, held talks with their counterparts at Damascus and Cairo and were received by Abdel Nasser.

Ambitious projects were mooted to weld the two countries together by revolutionizing their physical links—by the construction of new roads, railroads and telecommunication networks.

Further cooperation was envisaged in the field of education. Egyptian teachers previously expelled by Nuri from Iraq returned, accompanied by newcomers. Before they left again in the spring of 1959 their number had reached 497¹⁹. Prof. Sulaymān Ḥazīn, rector of Assiut University, was chosen to be president of the University of Baghdad although, as relations soon deteriorated, he never arrived. On October 28, after much publicity, Kamāl al-Dīn Ḥusayn, UAR Minister of Education, signed a Covenant for Arab Cultural Unity at Baghdad²⁰. This contained arrangements for coordinating the educational systems and curricula in both countries for institutions below university level, while the preamble stated that “unity of culture and thinking” was “the fundament of wider unity.” The agreement was not ratified by the Iraqi government until the end of March 1959—when it had become a dead letter.

The initial period closed with an event that according to protocol should have rated as the most important demonstration of Iraqi-Egyptian solidarity so far, although in reality it made little impression. This was the ceremonial visit to Cairo, at the beginning of November, of a state delegation headed by a member of the Sovereignty Council, Khālīd al-Naqshbandī. In Baghdad care seems to have been taken to detract from its significance; the delegation arrived in Cairo from similar visits to Rabat, Madrid and Benghazi. Little was made of it by the Cairo press which was preoccupied with reassessing the situation in Baghdad in the light of the dramatic developments then unfolding.

Cabinet ministers who had to pronounce in public on the burning issue

¹⁸ Ḥabīb was Minister of Defence for a time in 1964.

¹⁹ *Bilād—IT*, April 6, 1959.

²⁰ *Ahrām*, Oct. 28; *IT*, Oct. 29, 30, 1958.

of merger with the UAR during the first few months of the regime generally endeavoured to adopt Qassem's position of noncommittal brotherliness. As his style proved to be inimitable, they were forced to be more precise and hence made a more negative impression than Qassem probably intended to convey. Occasionally a confirmed adherent of "Unity now" such as Dr. Jābir 'Umar gave vent to his hopes for speedy consummation of the union, but even he did so in general terms²¹.

What was Abdel Nasser's stand on the question of Iraq's accession to the UAR?

Frequently on later occasions Abdel Nasser denied that he had exerted pressure on the new Iraqi rulers to join the UAR after the July revolution. On the contrary, he stated, he had expressed his "opinion that the Iraqi people should grow conscious of their freedom after long oppression before they exercised that freedom to determine their destiny²²." There is incontestable evidence, however, that both official and unofficial UAR emissaries did their utmost to promote *waḥda* among the Iraqis, that they gave assistance to further this end to all Iraqis willing to receive it, and that Abdel Nasser himself was fully conversant with these activities. In the Egyptian press highly coloured accounts were circulated about the Free Officers to show their determination to achieve *waḥda* soon after the revolution, and it was claimed by Muṣṭafā Amīn, editor of *Akhbār al-Yawm*, that "if Iraq had held a free plebiscite in July [1958], 99 per cent of the people would have voted in favour of full unity²³." Again, Rashīd 'Ālī's parting talk with Abdel Nasser, although incomplete, is unambiguous in its sense (see below, p. 128).

In all probability during the first year after the revolution Abdel Nasser dearly desired Iraq's accession, but he wanted to grant it as a favour. If this explanation seems irrational, it is not the only instance in which Abdel Nasser appears much less the man of coldly calculated action than has often been supposed.

²¹ e.g., *R. Baghdad*, August 29 [Sept. 1], 1958.

²² Thus Haykal, *Ahrām*, Nov. 17, 1961.

²³ *Akhbār al-Yawm—MENA*, March 21 [23], 1959.

CHAPTER 7 THE ROLE OF 'ABD AL-SALĀM AREF

At a very early date Col. 'Abd al-Salām Muḥammad Aref, conqueror of Baghdad, Deputy Commander-in-Chief and Deputy Prime Minister, Acting Minister of the Interior—in all these capacities a man of immense consequence—was regarded as the champion of the forces advocating “Unity now¹.” The Ba‘th daily *al-Jumhūriyya* was with reason regarded as his mouthpiece. Private utterances of his views, leaving nothing to conjecture, were quoted among the public. However, Aref’s reputation as the partisan of Abdel Nasser mainly rested on his public speeches and interviews.

Immediately after the takeover Aref began to tour the countryside explaining the revolution to the people. His harangues varied little in content, revealing a mind considerably more simple than Qassem’s. He showed a pious regard for Islam and preached strict austerity; his attacks on Western imperialism were incomparably more venomous than Qassem’s. There were impassioned pleas for confidence in Rubay’i, Qassem and himself—“your brothers Najīb, ‘Abd al-Karīm and ‘Abd al-Salām.” Otherwise Qassem was allocated a minor role in Aref’s perorations; occasionally he was mentioned with a touch of condescension, but often his name did not appear in the course of long speeches.

Qassem himself, like practically every other politician throughout the Arab world, had paid tribute to the ideal of an Arab nation and to the driving force of Arabism. What particularly marked Aref’s expressions of *‘urūba* during the heady weeks after the revolution, however, was the prominence accorded to Abdel Nasser, “our big brother,” or “our senior brother.” Aref’s devotion had more than a touch of hero worship. But Aref was no schoolboy and would have to be taken seriously. He left no doubt that he regarded Abdel Nasser as his leader in a revolutionary struggle involving the Arab world, where Iraq was only one of several fronts. If Aref generally showed caution in stating the ultimate implica-

¹ A week after the revolution Aref was already being presented to the West as “a more fiery nationalist than the Prime Minister” (*NYT*, July 21, 1958).

tion of this concept, when he felt himself in sympathetic surroundings he spoke in plain terms of his hope to see Iraq within the UAR².

An interview which Aref granted to Cairo Radio at the end of July reveals him as he regarded himself, and also as UAR propaganda found politic by that time to present him³. The interviewer introducing "this great hero" was modestly thanked by Aref "in the name of his colleagues and his own."

Question: "Your Excellency, how did the revolution take place?"

Aref: "In brief, some units were scheduled to pass through Baghdad. I was nominally one of the commanders of these units; spiritually, I thank God, I was able to command these units in reality . . . We surprised them at dawn, and the morning was good, and the nation met a good morning."

Question: "Your Excellency, may we know who was the first person to broadcast the report to all the Iraqi people and the world?"

Aref: "That is an embarrassing question. I—"

Question: "We know the answer, Your Excellency."

Aref: "In any case, the first reporter and—allow me to say—the leader of the command [*sic*] is your struggling brother 'Abd al-Salām."

Question: "At the beginning of the revolution Your Excellency received a cable from President Gamal Abdel Nasser followed by UAR recognition . . ."

Aref replied in suitable terms, apparently accepting the implied suggestion that he had been the proper person to receive communications from foreign heads of state. Neither of the participants mentioned Qassem in the interview.

* * *

The date when Qassem's suspicions of Aref's loyalty entered a stage which demanded firm measures can be pinpointed to the end of the first week of August. On August 6 Aref for the first time found it necessary to express publicly in glowing terms his complete devotion to Qassem. It can be assumed that he was not inspired to do so without prompting. A day earlier Qassem had made a fresh departure by commencing to hold a series of interviews with popular delegations whereby he could establish closer contact with the leaders of public opinion. On Thursday, August 7—

² e.g., at Ramadi, a centre of *qawmiyya* (*R. Baghdad*, Aug. 5 [7], 1958).

³ *R. Cairo*, July 24 [26], 1958.

a date which would linger in the memory of politically conscious Iraqis—the first demonstration against “Unity now” took place. On this occasion the crowds assembled in front of the Ministry of Defence gave voice to “their rejection of an immediate merger with the UAR”; they were graciously addressed three times by the Prime Minister⁴.

What made Qassem come out against the propaganda for “Unity now” at that particular time? Qassem’s motives cannot be established for sure. It is certain that at the outset Qassem had full confidence in Aref. For three weeks, however, Aref had publicized himself as the hero of the revolution; he had also stressed in every possible manner his belief in “Unity now.” On both counts he deeply offended Qassem, although Aref may not have known it at the time. At one point the cord would snap. Moreover it appears that Qassem was not without advisers as to the danger of Aref’s pretensions. The communist leaders, who feared union with the UAR (see Part II, below), already had easy access to Qassem⁵. The editor of *al-Ahrām* and Abdel Nasser’s confidant, Ḥasanayn Haykal, attributed the blame to the British Ambassador who at about that time, Haykal alleged, had “warned Qassem five consecutive times” against Aref’s supposed intrigues⁶. It was reported by foreign commentators that “political observers expect a new coup to take place within the Iraqi coup, through which Col. Aref will assume power in the same way as Gamal Abdel Nasser assumed power from the Egyptian revolutionary leader Muḥammad Naguib⁷.” Qassem evidently responded to this kind of baiting.

Aref was not immediately daunted. While Qassem was acknowledging the anti-unity demonstrations from the balcony of the Ministry of Defence, Aref was addressing rival crowds in front of the building which housed the Council of Ministers nearby; his listeners chanted in response to his periods, “We want Unity, not Federation⁸!” If this was an act of defiance on Aref’s part it was his last for a long time.

Early in mid-August, with a suddenness that in retrospect can only be termed dramatic, Aref altered the tenor of his speeches. On August 12 he took vehement issue with “the evil gossips” whom he accused of saying “there is a grievance between Karīm and Salām.” “They lie and God curse them⁹.” Thereafter Aref’s protestations of loyalty increased and he

⁴ *IT*, Aug. 9, 1958; *Revolution*, I, p. 260.

⁵ This is made clear from the evidence at Aref’s trial.

⁶ *Ahrām*, Jan. 27, 1959.

⁷ *R. Amman*, Aug. 6 [8], 1958.

⁸ *IT*, Aug. 9, 1958.

⁹ *R. Baghdad*, Aug. 12 [14], 1958.

accorded Qassem greater prominence while he himself retreated into the background. His hearers were greeted: "I salute you in the name of our brave leader . . ."; Qassem was invoked to emphasize a point: "our commander, leader and big brother yesterday told you. . . ." Aref was obviously badly shaken, and it is ironic to reflect that the cult of Qassem the Leader was initiated by Aref. Not indeed the cult of Qassem the Sole Leader; for while stressing Arab unity much less than hitherto, Aref continued to mention Abdel Nasser in public with expressions of love and reverence. He was not able to do so for long.

On August 26 Aref was welcomed in Basra by choruses of "Long Live Aref—the Nasser of Iraq¹⁰." Evidently Ba'thi-inspired, for the crowds also cheered the Ba'thi minister, Rikābī, the slogan was probably intended to encourage Aref to new exertions to promote Arab unity. That day Baghdad Radio relayed what was to be his last broadcast for four and a half years. On September 10, on the occasion of a visit to army headquarters at Ba'Quba, Aref addressed a civilian audience, greeting his hearers in the name of the still-born "Council of Revolutionary Command." The speech was possibly delivered on the spur of the moment, and certainly without a written draft. He then became involved in a slanging match with communist hecklers chanting for "Federation," which by now was the established slogan of the opponents of "Unity" (see Chapter 8).

This time his indiscretion seems to have been the last straw. Two days later Brig. Khalīl Sa'īd, commander of the Third Division, complained to Qassem of the embarrassment which Aref's behaviour had caused. Qassem thereupon showed him the draft of a Republican Decree relieving Aref of his post as Deputy Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces. The decree was published the same day. Aref's appointment as Acting Minister of the Interior was not affected.

It was not universally appreciated that Aref's demotion was principally due to his advocacy of unity with the UAR; nor was it in the interests of Qassem or Abdel Nasser to feed speculation in this direction. Qassem ignored the subject altogether, while official sources in Cairo gave publicity to the ingenuous explanation that the measure was aimed at enabling Aref to concentrate on his duties as Minister of the Interior¹¹.

At the same time Col. Aḥmad Ḥasan al-Bakr, a member of the military court, was also removed from his post¹². Bakr had strong Ba'thi leanings and was one of the first of the army officers to state privately that only a

¹⁰ *IT*, Aug. 28, 1958.

¹¹ *R. Cairo*, Sept. 17—*IMB*, Sept. 18, 1958.

¹² *WI*, No. 28, Sept. 11, 1958, p. 2; *NYT*, Sept. 24, 1958.

new coup could put Iraq back on the road to Arab nationalism. He was retired from the army for the remainder of Qassem's regime, although he was never arraigned. He returned to the public eye on February 8, 1963, as Prime Minister.

No successor to Aref as Deputy Commander-in-Chief was ever appointed.

* * *

On the evening of September 30, 1958, Baghdad Radio sprang on the public the news of a Cabinet reorganization, the first of many to come. It was announced that "in the public interest and on the recommendation of the Prime Minister" the Sovereignty Council had relieved Aref of his Cabinet functions and appointed him ambassador to the German Federal Republic. Fu'ād al-Rikābī, the Minister of Development, lost his department and became "Minister of State"—the first such appointment since the revolution. Dr. Jābir 'Umar, the Minister of Education, was dismissed. The Ministries of Development and Education were entrusted to Muḥammad Ḥadīd, the Minister of Finance, and Hudayb al-Ḥājj Ḥmūd, the Minister of Agriculture, respectively, in acting capacities. A newcomer to the Cabinet was appointed Minister of the Interior—Brig. Aḥmad Muḥammad Yaḥyā.

After the revolution Yaḥyā, a prominent Free Officer, had been appointed Rubay'ī's successor as ambassador to Saudi Arabia. His appointment to the Cabinet was also to create a precedent: Yaḥyā was the first of "Qassem's Friends" to be coopted; they were to be of assistance in solving many of Qassem's immediate problems of government, even if they failed in the long run. Yaḥyā turned out to be a particularly good choice. He lasted in office until the coup of 14th Ramaḍān, to be the longest-lived minister of the Qassem regime with the exception of Qassem himself.

When Aref had been relieved as Deputy Commander-in-Chief it had been possible to suggest, with some chance of acceptance, that this step did not indicate the existence of dissension among the rulers of Iraq. This time the circumstances showed irrefutably that Aref's dismissal from the Cabinet reflected a political decision of the highest order. The movement for "Unity now" had been dealt a sharp blow. Aref's demotion from a key ministry to an embassy was a sufficient pointer, while the transfer of Rikābī, regional secretary of the Iraqi Ba'th, from the Ministry of Development, and the unceremonious dismissal of Jābir 'Umar, served to give it emphasis.

There can be no doubt that Qassem was convinced that Aref was chiefly responsible for the split that by now was rending the Iraqi people between

the champions of "Unity now" and its opponents. His view seems to have been shared by a majority of the senior army officers¹³.

Qassem was evidently ready for trouble in the wake of the Cabinet reshuffle: on the following day a proclamation of 'Abdī transferred the trying of offenders for the illicit carrying of firearms from the competence of the civilian to the military courts. Qassem told a visiting British Member of Parliament that the rumours of differences among the Iraqi leaders were exaggerated "although there have been some minor differences among us;" this qualification, however, was omitted in the account of the interview broadcast from Baghdad¹⁴. It is interesting that in Cairo efforts were still being made to preserve appearances: on October 10 Cairo Radio reported that differences between Qassem and Aref had been ironed out "in a personal talk¹⁵." Four days later the same source quoted Aref, "the Iraqi ambassador to Bonn," as labelling reports of a quarrel between him and Qassem "ridiculous." Listeners were not told where the ambassador was when he made this statement; certainly he was not in Bonn.

Aref's movements during the five weeks that elapsed from his dismissal from the Cabinet until his arrest on November 4 can now be traced, although very little was made public at the time. So far as can be ascertained, Iraqi information media did not mention him during the period, except to report his departure from Iraq.

The dismissal and the appointment to Bonn came as a surprise to Aref himself. For some days after September 30 he kept to his home in A'zamiyya. On the night of October 3 Aref was visited by about ten political friends, among whom were his erstwhile colleagues in the Cabinet, Nāji Tālib, Fu'ād al-Rikābī and Dr. Jābir 'Umar. The tempers of the company ran high. Aref's friends were disgusted with the latest developments and promised to have Aref reinstated. In his speech of thanks, Aref acknowledged that Iraq was in a state of confusion and that more than one revolution was needed; as for himself, although determined never to go to Germany, he was resigned to the loss of his appointments—the Prophet himself had suffered torture when he preached his tenets¹⁶.

¹³ This inference is strongly supported by the evidence at Aref's trial of officers not otherwise hostile to the accused (*Protocols*, V, p. 223, et seq.).

¹⁴ *Mid. Mir.*, Oct. 12, 1958; *R. Baghdad*, Oct. 8 [10], 1958.

¹⁵ *R. Cairo—IBM*, Oct. 10, 1958. It would have been piquant if the occasion of this "personal talk" could be pinpointed to the meeting when Aref had attempted to shoot either Qassem or himself (see below), but the date does not permit the possibility.

¹⁶ *Protocols*, V, pp. 455–6.

An account of this meeting lay before Qassem the following morning. There can be no doubt that foreign reports of a conspiracy that had been uncovered on October 4, "long before the coup was due to occur," took their substance from the gathering at Aref's home¹⁷. Qassem reacted by returning the Third Battalion of the Twentieth Brigade to its permanent base at Jalaula. It had been stationed in Baghdad since the revolution and might be presumed to have remained loyal to Aref, its former commander. Probably also at this point, Col. Darrājī, a close friend of Aref who had been appointed commander of the Twentieth Brigade after the revolution, was posted to the Military College, a less sensitive position. To all enquiries the government denied that arrests were being made, but it seems that certain officers, among them Col. 'Abd al-Raḥmān 'Ārif, Aref's elder brother and since the revolution commander of the Third Armoured Brigade, received severe admonition.

Perhaps influenced by these steps, and certainly under pressure from his former colleagues in the army and the government, Aref then agreed to take up his new appointment, but changed his mind again. Finally the heads of the army convened at Qassem's office on the morning of Saturday, October 11, to make another assault on Aref's stubbornness. In addition to Qassem and Aref, those present were 'Abdī; the commanders of the four army divisions; Col. Jidda, commander of the Military Police; Col. Waṣ-ṣī Ṭāhir, principal aide-de-camp to Qassem; Nāji Ṭālib; and Brig. Fu'ād 'Ārif, the governor of Karbala Province. The two last must have been summoned as friends of Aref capable of influencing him. Later Maj.-Gen. Muḥammad al-Shawwāf, the surgeon general, joined the gathering. They argued on without result. Aref based his refusal on his wife's sickness, his unsuitability for a diplomatic assignment, and the danger to his life which might be expected from vengeful royalists and reactionaries abroad. He was hardly coherent.

After five hours of unavailing discussion, Qassem, Aref and Fu'ād 'Ārif found themselves alone in the room. Suddenly Aref reached for his revolver. Qassem, turning towards him, shouted, "What are you doing, 'Abd al-Salām?" and succeeded in wresting the revolver from him with Fu'ād 'Ārif's assistance. When Brig. 'Abd al-Ḥamīd, commander of the Fourth Division, joined them, Qassem announced that Aref had tried to kill him. Aref, in mounting hysteria, shouted that he had wanted to commit suicide. Qassem: "Then why didn't you do so at home?" Meanwhile the others were streaming into the room. It had all happened in a matter of seconds and the uproar can be imagined. Qassem said something like "I pardon you, but for the

¹⁷ *The Times*, Oct. 8; *Mid. Mir.*, Oct. 12, 1958.

good of the country you must go abroad. You have split the country in two, and I will remove you from bad men. You will return when affairs calm down¹⁸." Aref still refused, while the rest shouted at him and soothed him in turns.

Later that night Qassem took Aref aside for a talk. The Prime Minister told him that he would have to go on the morrow—all arrangements had been made and no refusal would be brooked; however, Aref might come back in three weeks' time. Aref at last gave way. The two rejoined the company; Qassem announced Aref's compliance and the promise that he might return after three weeks, and there was a general feeling of relief. The following morning, on October 12, Aref set off by air to Europe in the company of the incumbent ambassador to Bonn, 'Alī Ḥaydar Sulaymān. A description of the departure conveys something of the tension surrounding it and the subsequent release: "Security guards at Baghdad airport were doubled before he boarded the plane. . . Col. Aref's car drove onto the tarmac shortly before departure time. It was followed by the Prime Minister, Brig. 'Abd al-Karīm Qassem, and a procession of bodyguards. Col. Aref shook hands with Brig. Qassem and was embraced by his army officer friends before he left¹⁹."

It had been agreed that Aref should make a tour of various European capitals before settling down at Bonn. Sulaymān explained that this was to give him time to clear his desk; it may have been calculated to calm Aref by allowing him a taste of the sweet life.

Aref and Sulaymān first visited the World's Fair at Brussels. Sulaymān returned from Brussels to Bonn. Aref continued his tour to Holland, Rome and Vienna, more or less according to schedule and in touch with the Iraqi representatives responsible for his arrangements. From Vienna Aref was to have gone to Bonn to enter upon his new duties.

It was reported by an unfriendly source at the time that Aref took this opportunity to visit Cairo for talks with Abdel Nasser²⁰. This has been denied by both²¹, and no evidence has been produced to contradict their statements.

It is clear that Aref understood the tour as his part in a discreet bargain with Qassem. He would return to Baghdad after three weeks. He never intended to take up his post as ambassador, and made no arrangements with Sulaymān to do so. He did not even provide himself with civilian

¹⁸ *Protocols*, V, p. 231.

¹⁹ *Mid. Mir.*, Oct. 19, 1958.

²⁰ *Hawl al-Ālam*, Amman, Oct. 23, 1958.

²¹ Aref, in *Protocols*, V, p. 433. Abdel Nasser, in his Damascus speech, *R. Cairo*, March 13 [16], 1959.

clothes. On the other hand, he no longer protested against his stay abroad for the time being. On October 30 Aref cabled Qassem announcing his return within the next few days. At the same time, at Sulaymān's request, the Iraqi chargé d'affaires at Vienna contacted Baghdad for instructions. Qassem replied through the Foreign Ministry on October 31 that Aref should proceed to Bonn. Sulaymān informed Aref of this over the telephone but received an evasive reply. According to Aref's statement during his trial, he believed the telephone from Baghdad was an indirect confirmation of his original agreement with Qassem, and that he was to go to Bonn only in order "to inform Baghdad on my views about the situation at the Iraqi mission there." His telephone conversation with Sulaymān had established that nothing was amiss at the Bonn embassy, so Aref "decided to leave immediately and on my own in order to know what was happening in Baghdad." He bought his air ticket privately and left Vienna on the night of November 3-4, making no effort to keep his departure secret and travelling under his own name. While he was flying through the night, cables from Vienna and Bonn alerted the Baghdad authorities.

Aref arrived at Baghdad in the mid-morning of November 4 and drove in a taxicab to his home, escorted by security guards. His behaviour at the airport supports his claim that he did his best not to attract attention, although his avoidance of publicity might also bear a more sinister construction. Almost immediately he was summoned to Qassem at the Ministry of Defence. The two men engaged in an altercation in the presence of Col. Jidda. Aref reminded Qassem of his promise to permit his return after three weeks. Qassem reiterated that Aref's absence was required by the internal situation and asked Aref to name any assignment he wished, provided that it lay abroad. If Aref chose an embassy, Qassem was prepared to hold him subordinate directly to himself, without reference to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Aref, however, held his ground; he did not mind what he did, so long as he stayed in Baghdad. At last Qassem lost patience; the deadlock was complete, and he ordered Aref from his presence. Jidda was told to take Aref to Military Police headquarters; he was under arrest. There is a minor discrepancy at this stage between the accounts of Aref and of Jidda. Jidda claimed that Qassem gave Aref a last respite until night-fall to change his mind, which Aref did not take advantage of. According to Aref, Qassem merely told him to "think matters over" and that he would pay him, Aref, a visit—which he failed to do. Once Jidda returned from Military Police headquarters, Qassem talked himself into a rage and ordered the publication of Aref's arrest and commitment for trial.

At 10 p.m. on the night after Aref's return, Baghdad Radio broadcasted the following "Commander-in-Chief's proclamation:"

“Retired Staff Colonel ‘Abd al-Salām Muḥammad Aref, the Iraqi ambassador in Bonn, has come to Baghdad without authority or permission. In view of the public interest, and because of his repeated attempts to disturb the public peace, he was arrested this day and will be put on trial on the charge of plotting against the safety of the homeland.”

The dénouement came “to the surprise of most people²².”

* * *

Despite the secrecy which shrouded Aref’s tribulations, they did not remain unknown in Baghdad. Soon after his departure for Europe it was rumoured that something could be expected to happen on or about November 5. Speculation was unbounded. Aref would return to the Cabinet. Qassem would be arrested. Waṣfī Ṭāhir—considered the spearhead of communist penetration in the government—would be eliminated. “Disensions” would cease—evidently through accommodation to Aref, not to Qassem. There were apparently no predictions of bloodshed. Further hints of a plot came to light subsequently at Aref’s trial. Maj. Ṣāliḥ Maḥdī ‘Ammāsh, who did not give evidence himself, was mentioned as the prime mover of these “plans.” The publishers of *al-Jumhūriyya* were implicated. In his opening statement the prosecutor mentioned “Col. Aḥmad Ḥasan al-Bakr and his treacherous clique” as having been in contact with Aref; these very amateurish affairs had been uncovered and “many ignorant officers were arrested²³.” Aref denied that he had anything to do with any of the alleged conspirators while in Europe, or with any other Iraqis apart from his official contacts. It may be considered certain, however, that the rumours of an impending change had reached him, and that he took them into account in hastening home.

Aref’s trial before Maḥdāwī opened *in camera* on December 27; it will be observed that the two trials of Rashīd ‘Alī had been concluded by then (see Chapter 10: “Rashīd ‘Alī’s Plot”).

In the period of almost two months that preceded his trial Aref started a hunger strike from which he was dissuaded. He complained that he was denied the privileges of a political detainee. He seems to have sounded one of his officer guards on the chances of arranging liberation by paratroopers,

²² *Mid. Mir.*, Nov. 9, 1958.

²³ Waṣfī Ṭāhir’s testimony (*Protocols*, V, p. 270). The great majority of these officers, with the certain exceptions of Bakr and ‘Ammāsh, were set free after a short time and reinstated in the service, until they became implicated in Shawwāf’s revolt.

“like Mussolini”; Aref later claimed that he had been approached by an agent provocateur.

Aref was charged on two counts:

a) that he had taken part in the organization and command of a “disaffected body” of officers at the head of some army units in order to stage a revolution on the night of November 4–5, 1958. The offence fell under section 80 of the Baghdad Penal Code dating from British occupation times, which prescribed the death penalty for “anyone who . . . has any part in the command of an armed body . . . using force to overthrow and change the government”;

b) that he had attempted to assassinate “the leader of the country.” The offence was covered by section 60 and section 214, paragraph 6, of the Baghdad Penal Code, carrying life imprisonment.

The accused pleaded not guilty to both counts.

Aref defended himself ably, with shrewd regard for the realities of the situation. He contended that Qassem never had, and never would have, a more devoted friend and admirer. If Aref had seemed to neglect Qassem in his earlier speeches, that was in response to “the Leader’s” wish to uphold in his person true republican humility. The desire for “unity” accorded with the well-known principles of the revolution which regarded the Iraqi people as part of the Arab nation. He had never meant to imply that Abdel Nasser was the “Sole Leader,” or that the revolution had been effected with Egyptian help. He had never been a member of the Ba’th (which was by now virtually outlawed). As Minister of the Interior he had been fair to all, and if he had made mistakes, they had been due to his political inexperience. He had reached for his revolver in a fit of despair to put an end to his life.

Aref’s counsel, Muḥammad al-‘Abṭa, submitted an honest case for acquittal, on points both of fact and of law; he did not dispute that the offences with which his client was charged were heinous and that the court was competent to deal with them.

Some of Aref’s erstwhile comrades were among the witnesses for the prosecution. Their behaviour towards the accused varied according to their respective characters, inclinations and interests, from the balanced fairness of ‘Abdī to the vindictiveness of Waṣfī Ṭāhir: they certainly do not appear to have testified under coercion or intimidation.

Called as a witness for the defence, the Attorney General, ‘Abd al-Amīr al-‘Ukaylī, did his best to show that Aref had never used his influence against communists and had never discriminated between them and other political bodies.

On the whole Maḥdāwī's demeanour throughout Aref's trial was dignified. The decencies were the better preserved because of the secret nature of the trial. There was no gallery to whip Maḥdāwī on as happened during public sessions of the court. An obvious defect of the proceedings was the non-appearance of the key witness, Qassem himself.

Judgment was delivered on February 5, 1959. Aref was acquitted on the first count and found guilty on the second. However, the court found that "the act of assassination" (*sic*) fell under section 11 of the Martial Law Ordinance, 1935 (which had not been mentioned in the original indictment); this sentenced to death by hanging any person found guilty of carrying arms against the government, its armed forces or its police, or using arms against any public official. But in view of Aref's services during the revolution and his zeal against the old regime, the court would make a recommendation of mercy to "our Leader."

Formally, the conviction for "the act of assassination" was a travesty of justice. It rested on the opinion of the principal—Qassem—who was quoted at the trial by others. This evidence was appropriately buttressed by medical opinion: according to the surgeon general, suicide was "always" carried out in a locked room; "therefore" Aref's purpose had not been suicide.

Aref's actual intention, if examined in the light of probability, remains a matter for speculation. Aref, on his record, must be considered capable of murder as well as of an affect killing. On the other hand, he was undoubtedly overcome by excitement and despair at the time.

Aref's acquittal of armed conspiracy was, by accepted Western standards, the only result that could have followed from the evidence presented to the court. It could be shown that Aref had disobeyed orders, that he was unbalanced, and that he had indulged in reckless and dangerous talk, but there was no proof of conspiracy. However, Qassem's Iraq was not a Western constitutional state. By now, Maḥdāwī himself had already pronounced sentences carrying the extreme penalty in indictments for treason or conspiracy that were based on far flimsier grounds than Aref's conviction would have been. It may therefore be assumed that the verdict was delivered in accordance with Qassem's instructions. In any case, Aref had been sentenced to death for the "act of assassination." But Maḥdāwī's recommendation for mercy, which also must have been prompted by Qassem, virtually ensured Aref's survival.

Why should Qassem adopt this course when he knew Aref to be a man of action, capable of engaging loyalties, ruthless and cunning? He must have realized that Aref would always remain a rallying point for pro-Nasser nationalism in Iraq. If Aref had in fact not engaged in an armed

conspiracy so far, he could—if spared—be counted upon to do so at the earliest opportunity. Part of the explanation may undoubtedly be found in Qassem's self-confidence and his normal dislike of bloodshed. On the other hand, he must always have retained a remnant of that affection for Aref which had caused his lieutenant's elevation in the first place. Perhaps Qassem regarded Aref as a mischievous schoolboy, not basically wicked. His feeling that Aref was influenced by others was revealed in the moment of strain: "I will remove you from bad men."

After his conviction Aref was returned to the military prison at Rashid camp.

* * *

In the discussion of Aref's role in the 1958 coup and its aftermath, one aspect remains for consideration. An interpretation of events offered soon after the revolution by serious observers was that "there are already those who believe that Brig. 'Abd al-Karim Qassem is the Naguib to Col. 'Abd al-Salām Aref's Abdel Nasser²⁴."

By this analogy, Qassem played no real part in the revolution. It indicates that the Free Officers intended to use him as a figurehead because he had a public reputation for decency and independence, because he supplied a father image and because he was believed to be without ambition. This description might well be applied to Rubay'i; it does not fit Qassem in the least.

While it is generally tempting to draw comparisons between persons or events, the present parallel may have been inspired by circles in Cairo to boost Aref's position. In part it also could have been inferred from Qassem's seeming diffidence and Aref's unquestionable assertiveness during the first weeks after the revolution. But even so, there was a difference from the position in Egypt six years earlier, since Naguib had visibly enjoyed his prominence, and Abdel Nasser had stayed in the background. The main reason for the currency of the comparison at the time, therefore, must have been that Aref himself accepted it as true, and communicated it to others.

Evidence is complete that Aref believed himself the real captain of the revolution—the driving force and architect of the movement before the coup, and the executor of the coup itself²⁵. Yet even his own estimate does not turn him into the Abdel Nasser of Iraq. The keystone of Abdel Nasser's

²⁴ *The Economist*, Aug. 2, 1958.

²⁵ e.g., Aref, in *Ḥayāt*, Feb. 17, 1963.

political position was his uncontested leadership of the Free Officers as a group. This leadership was never within Aref's grasp because of the different conditions in Iraq, the accident of events, and above all, his different personality. His eventual comeback took place in a much altered political climate, where observers no longer expected to find a Nasser of Iraq.

PART TWO

THE COMMUNIST CHALLENGE



CHAPTER 8 THE COMMUNIST BUILD-UP BEFORE AREF'S ARREST

The fortunes of the Iraqi Communist Party during the first year after the revolution may be divided into three clearly defined phases.

The first phase was one of adaptation to the new position, at a time when Arab nationalism was still the prevailing force to all appearances in Iraq. The second was the overt onslaught launched by the communists, while the government seemed—if not actually allied to them—at least too weak or too undiscerning to offer effective opposition. This stage includes the Rashīd 'Ālī and Shawwāf nationalist counterplots which both ended in disaster, thereby giving additional impetus to the communist surge forward. The second phase closed at the beginning of May, 1959, when it became known that Qassem had rejected the communist claim for official recognition. Finally, there was a confrontation of wills between Qassem and the communists which was decided by the beginning of August, when the ICP first openly acknowledged its failure. The communist advance then turned, and with its retreat communism ceased to exert an effective influence inside Iraq.

* * *

Throughout its vicissitudes under Qassem, and for the greater part of the time in anger and frustration, the Iraqi Communist Party never ceased to regard his regime as “national” (*waṭānī*); that is, in the terminology of the communists, as basically “good.”

What were the reasons governing their attitude? The following points may be adduced:

- 1) Qassem's regime was “anti-imperialist” in origin and committed to stay out of Western defence systems;
- 2) Qassem's first weeks in power established his determination to stay independent of the UAR—a vital consideration of communist party policy in the Arab Middle East;
- 3) Qassem's regime was the least of all evils if the possibility of com-

munist government was excepted, and this the communists never anticipated—unless for one very brief period—in the immediate future.

* * *

In order to obtain the complete picture, we must examine the contemporary communist analysis¹.

The ICP attitude towards the regime was based on the premise that "the July revolution is the revolution of all the anti-imperialist and anti-feudalist classes²." Though the takeover had been triggered by "a group of officers representing the national bourgeoisie" the latter group had since been reluctant, at the least, to share its power with "the working classes and the peasants led by the Communist Party."

The expression "national bourgeoisie" is a key term. Communist doctrine and strategy in the 1920s, and again after the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1956, postulated that in under-developed countries there could be a community of interests between communists and the non-proletarian or even actively exploitative classes if their interests ran counter to those of "imperialism."

In a representative essay, the classes constituting the "national bourgeoisie" were defined as "that section of the bourgeoisie in the colonial and dependent countries whose main activities are linked with national production, with the sale of home-made goods on the foreign and home markets, and that part of the trading bourgeoisie which deals with the marketing of foreign goods but is not directly linked with imperialist monopolies³." In line with this thinking, communists could hold that the core of the national bourgeoisie were the local industrialists who were more cramped by imperialist exploitation than other local capitalists.

According to the communist analysis, the concentration of power under Qassem in the hands of the national bourgeoisie was highly unusual: it

¹ The following exposition is based on three Iraqi communist appreciations of the revolution and Qassem's regime, made in greatly differing situations:

a) "Report of the Enlarged Session of the ICP Central Committee in September 1958," reprinted in part in *Iraqi Review*, July 30, 1959;

b) do. of mid-July 1959, published in *Itihād al-Sha'b*, Aug. 29, 1959 (elsewhere *CC Report*);

c) Muhammad Salim, "Three years after the Iraqi Revolution", *WMR*, Oct. 1961, pp. 35–41.

² Superscription of the first paragraph of *CC Report*.

³ Eskandari, "What Do We Mean by the National Bourgeoisie?", *WMR*, Sept. 1959, pp. 72–3.

could not be attributed to the strength of the national bourgeoisie. On the contrary, "Before the revolution the national bourgeoisie was weak both economically and politically, for the imperialists retarded the development of the national industry ... The Iraqi bourgeoisie is still largely a merchant class, although it is connected with the big landowners who use feudal methods of rural exploitation. The industrial group of the national bourgeoisie is only a small segment of this class, while industrialists not connected with the big landowners are fewer still." But the national bourgeoisie, unlike "the masses," was well represented among the army officers who alone were capable of seizing power. Having grasped it, they held fast: "By capturing power the national bourgeoisie were able to consolidate their political influence throughout the country. As the dominant force they have now more political, economic and ideological freedom than any other class."

However, "at the same time the influence of the working class had also substantially increased." It was the working class "headed by the Communist Party" that had both created the conditions for the revolution and ensured its consolidation by providing the necessary sequel to the officers' coup. The national bourgeoisie had never recognized this fact or had never drawn from it the conclusion that the communists should be admitted to a share in government. This situation was not "natural"; it was a "contradiction" which was "the main reason for ... disagreements between the national parties and groups inside the national movement itself."

Yet, it was emphasized, the fundamental "progressive" propensities of the national bourgeoisie must never be forgotten. The national bourgeoisie should not be regarded as having "betrayed the revolution and sold out to imperialism," even though it was labelled "inconsistent, hesitant and prone to compromise"—according with the basic contradictions inherent in its composition⁴.

This train of thought inevitably implied a reconstruction of the United National Front, which would be "an alliance of all the national forces interested in getting rid of the remnants of imperialism and feudalism, in establishing democracy, an independent foreign policy and cooperation with the socialist camp." On this front the guidance of the state would devolve, once political freedom was restored. The communists always voiced the conviction that this devolution should take place naturally and without violence.

⁴ "Tactics of 'Alliance and Struggle' with the Bourgeoisie" is the title of one of the chapters in M. Salim's essay (op. cit.), and might serve as the subtitle of the entire work.

The ICP never expressly stated what lay beyond the achievement of a United National Front. That this could be regarded as an intermediary stage was indicated by occasional references, and presumably "socialism" was expected as the final outcome.

This analysis can be understood only if springing from a fundamentally optimistic assessment of the regime. The regime, with all its shortcomings from the communist point of view, was believed to promise the party the chance of developing its potential without legal restriction; in such conditions it could expect victory.

* * *

The ICP's rejection of "Unity" with the UAR had been determined by recent developments in Syria. There the Communist Party (united at the time with that of Lebanon) had increased in power and influence ever since the downfall of Adīb Shishakli in 1954, under its secretary Khālīd Bakdāsh, a Damascus Kurd and "independent" member of parliament. The fear of a communist takeover had largely decided the ruling politicians, including the Ba'this, to throw in their lot with Abdel Nasser at the turn of 1957–58. The Communist Party had made a virtue of necessity in welcoming the union on the assumption that "the movement for Arab unity at the present stage is progressive by virtue of its anti-imperialist and anti-feudal trend⁵." However, as early as June 1958, Bakdāsh stated his fundamental resentment: "An attempt was made to talk us into disbanding the party—at least formally and for a time—and voting for the new constitution, still far removed as it is from democratic principles. We declared that we were for Arab unity but that we should never vote for anti-democratic principles and would never agree to disband our party. . . Arab unity must be built upon complete liberation from imperialism *and upon a democratic foundation*" (present author's italics)⁶.

This attitude towards union with the UAR—nominally positive but with a limiting proviso, which in the circumstances rendered it unequivocally negative—had already been adopted by the Iraqi Communist Party by the time of the July revolution.

* * *

The Iraqi Communist Party officially welcomed the revolution without delay or qualification, although its overtures were not made public at once doubtless for tactical reasons on the part of both sides.

⁵ L. Tismaneanu, "US Colonialism and the Arab East," *WMR*, Sept. 1958, p. 41.

⁶ *WMR*, Sept. 1958, p. 70.

In the morning hours of July 14 the secretary of the ICP central committee sent the following telegram to "the Sovereignty Council of the Iraqi Republic" and to the Prime Minister⁷:

"We congratulate you warmly on your successful step which put a decisive end to the long period of misery and difficulties suffered by our fighting people under the hands of imperialism and its agents.

"We express our optimism that this decisive step will be the beginning of a new era of freedom and development for our Iraq; an era in which our people will take their position in the peace-loving liberated Arab procession and in the procession of humanity striving for liberation from imperialism and oppression.

"Our Iraqi people, Arabs and Kurds, will recall with pride your courage and sincerity in fulfilling their major national aims; they will defend and safeguard with their blood their young national republic. They are confident of their ability to undertake this sacred task. They are confident also of the support of the Arab forces of liberation everywhere, headed by the UAR, and of the forces of freedom and peace in the world headed by the Soviet Union.

"The central committee of our Communist Party places all the forces of the party at your aid for the defence of our republic."

Later that day the central committee sent Qassem—the Sovereignty Council was no longer mentioned—a "Memorandum" which went far beyond the generalities of a congratulation. Its gist was the warning that it is easier to win victory than to preserve it. The advantage gained might be lost through faint-heartedness, complacency or an ill-timed concern for the maintenance of order and harmony, as befell the regimes of Mo-saddeq in Iran and Nābulī in Jordan. The party, the memorandum continued, was conscious of the opprobrium it might incur by such warnings; those interested in misleading the people with their slogans for combating "anarchy" were always ready to push the party onto "slippery ground." All the same the party held the following "remarks" to be necessary. These recommended:

- 1) "An energetic and clear national policy"—secession from the Baghdad Pact, termination of the Special Agreement with Great Britain, proclamation of federal union with "the UAR and Yemen," "an

⁷ The four documents dealt with in this chapter were all published in *IS*, July 18, 1959.

independent foreign policy," and the establishment of diplomatic relations with the communist bloc;

- 2) an internal policy "relying on the faith of the people," to include freedom of assembly, of organization and of publication; the release of political prisoners: the encouragement of "Committees for the Defence of the Republic"; and the raising and arming of "people's resistance detachments" in view of the experiences in the UAR and Lebanon;
- 3) control of the oil companies and other economic undertakings in order to preserve the national wealth and eliminate potential conspiracies;
- 4) staffing the guidance and propaganda services with "patriotic democratic" personnel, in order to maintain unity in the ranks of the people. This was to be given greatest attention, for on the first day of the revolution the public communication media had ignored the Kurdish people and adopted "an arbitrary attitude towards the hundreds of messages of support because of their patriotic and democratic character."

Also on July 14 the ICP central committee addressed a "Statement" to the people. It repeated the main arguments and demands of the memorandum, although the semi-apologetic overtones were omitted.

The revolution, therefore, found the ICP decided on all important issues. Apart from the obvious stand on the Baghdad Pact, relations with the communist bloc, and political prisoners, there is a confident assumption that the ICP would be able to handle "the people" in its own interests. Hence the demands for the various freedoms, including freedom of "organization," for a people's resistance force and for committees for the defence of the republic. "Federation" with the UAR was soon to become a communist rallying cry which despite its positive appeal really denoted opposition to full "Unity." Easily discernible as countering gravitation towards Cairo is the double emphasis on political entity—the Iraqi state—and on ethnic heterogeneity—Arabs and Kurds, the latter an important element in the ICP. The communist obsession that plots and intrigues were at work against the party is revealed on the first day of the revolution.

A document made public by the ICP just before the revolution was a "General Directive" dated July 12, 1958; this had been unsigned at the time, but a year later was claimed by the ICP as having issued from its "command." The directive "deemed it necessary," "due to the critical

situation in the internal and Arab fields and the possibility of developments," to restate the party's demands: withdrawal from the Western treaties; implementation of internal measures identical with those shortly to be demanded in the memorandum; and a government that would support "the Lebanese people," transform the Arab Federation into "a real union between Iraq and Jordan," and establish "a Federal Union with the UAR." The directive also stressed the necessity "of avoiding. . .extremist slogans or slogans glorifying this or that leader," for "vigilance" and "complete faithfulness" to the party, and of rallying the masses "around the proper slogans at the critical moment."

Of the points made by the directive the most interesting are the warnings against "extremist slogans"—obviously directed at those advocating full accession to the UAR—and "glorifying this or that leader"—as obviously indicating Abdel Nasser. Here the mode of expression is as significant as the subject-matter itself. The ICP merely hinted, but the suggestion would be clear enough to the politically minded.

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It soon became axiomatic with the ICP that the communists had taken a vital part in the success of the coup. In fact, they had nothing to do with the overthrow of the old regime, either in its planning and organization, or in its execution. The communists had certainly welcomed the coup as enthusiastically as any other group. They did contribute to the revolution in so far as their attitude stiffened the Free Officers before the coup and insured the new regime against an attempt at a royalist comeback afterwards.

* * *

On the morrow of the revolution the ICP was unquestionably the most effective party in Iraq. Its membership was diminutive according to Western concepts—three thousand is a reasonable approximation. In this case, however, size is misleading. The party members formed a cadre of devoted individuals, many of them inured to sacrifice, tautly organized throughout the length and breadth of the country. National leadership was normally exercised by the political bureau whose members during the Qassem period were the ICP secretary Ḥusayn al-Raḍī, a Najaf Shi'i and teacher by profession, the lawyer 'Amir 'Abdallah, a Sunni Arab, and the Kurd Jamāl al-Ḥaydarī.

The first phase in the ICP record under the republic saw a mushrooming

as spectacular as it was fraught with danger. The former aspect was described by a communist source a year later⁸:

"[Following upon the revolution] hundreds of thousands of workers, peasants and all the masses in the cities and countryside joined in the political activity. Thus the tasks of our party increased tenfold. . . It had to contribute greatly to the efforts aiming at organizing the people in trade unions, associations and democratic organizations. It had to undertake wide actions and activities that were within the duty of other patriotic institutions which could not properly perform their responsibilities. It had to exert efforts to educate the masses and to combat erroneous ideas and concepts. Our party honourably shouldered these tasks. . .

"[The fulfilment of these tasks] depended first and foremost on providing more party cadres... Large numbers were nominated as party candidates, large numbers were admitted into the ranks of the party. . .

"Ever since the victory of the revolution the leadership of the party adhered to the spirit of the Leninist principle of collective leadership. During the first months after the revolution the central committee of the party exercised its role in designing and guiding the policy of the party."

All party members were released from prison during the first two months after the revolution. These were inevitably among the most active of the movement. Many others returned from abroad under the government's restitution programme. The impetus given to the party through the revolution and its wake can easily be estimated. So far, the dangers and disadvantages of hypertrophy were not recognized or combated by the leaders in Iraq.

The external problem which faced the ICP from the day of the revolution placed the party in a dilemma. It had to prevent Iraq from being swept into "Unity" with the UAR, or full political union on the Syrian pattern; at the same time it wished to alienate as little as possible either the public, in the prevailing mood of intoxication with Arab nationalism, or the Cairo regime itself.

To attain both objectives was an impossible undertaking. The second, being merely desirable and not essential, was abandoned by degrees.

In the voicing of political demands, nationalist slogans held a virtual monopoly in Baghdad and the Sunni centres of the northwest for some time after the revolution. It was different in the Kurdish areas, where

⁸ *CC Report*, p. 7.

rejoicing at the downfall of the monarchy had nothing to do with the wish for Arab unity, and where placards on July 14 were exalting "Arab-Kurdish Brotherhood" instead. The Shi'i provinces of the central and southern plains would also remain passive to clarion calls from Cairo, and as the centres of agrarian misery would eagerly welcome any watchword the communists might adopt. In Diwaniya and Kut, in Karbala and Amara, quasi-communist slogans predominated from the first.

It was in Baghdad, however, that the political fate of the country would be determined, and here the ICP had to struggle to make itself heard. Rival processions appeared towards the end of July; these did not as yet engage in open polemics, certainly not in exchanges of mutual abuse; to the outsider it may have been far from clear what the opponents' positions were. The shibboleth adopted by the communists was "Federation" against the pan-Arabists' "Unity," the Arabic *ittiḥād* and *wahda*, through their common stem, being more nearly associated than is indicated by translation. Then, on August 7, came the first monster demonstration to which Qassem gave his encouragement; apart from the demand for "Federation," other slogans were also flourished expressly rejecting "Unity now," apparently for the first time.

There followed clashes, increasing in frequency, scale, geographic dispersal and ferocity.

They took place mainly in nationalist centres. The street battles between the communists and their opponents reached a crescendo when the latter turned out in mass to welcome the UAR ministerial delegation during the last days of October. When Aref's arrest was announced a few days later, communist rule of the streets was no longer in doubt.

Despite their undisguised rivalry, as yet the two antagonists did not care to break the bond supposedly uniting them in the common national and anti-imperialist struggle, and the ICP still hesitated to censure the UAR or its president openly. However, pretence was wearing thin. Shortly before Aref's return, a declaration of the ICP reaffirmed its advocacy on principle of "complete Arab union from the Arab Gulf to the Atlantic Ocean"; but it was also asserted that the Iraqi people were "thirsty for democratic freedom, and that this would not be achieved in merging with the UAR where there is no freedom for political parties⁹."

* * *

⁹ *World News*, London, Dec. 13, 1958.

In September 1958 the central committee of the ICP, at an enlarged session, enumerated "the major tasks facing our party and national movement today"¹⁰.

The programme did not deviate materially from the points advocated two months earlier. However, a shift in tone and emphasis had taken place. The "national government" was not kindly looked upon. Demands were formulated more baldly, complaints less wrapped up: the freedom of organization and publication belonged to the people "as of right"; the party had to obtain "the necessary democratic conditions for the election of a constituent assembly... to draw up a democratic constitution"; "rightist nationalist circles" were accused of "an anti-democratic attitude." The ICP found the main reason for the "deepening of disagreements" among the forces of the revolution in the regime's refusal to share power with the representatives of the "workers and peasants." The party could remove this "contradiction" by "relying on the mobilization of the masses." This was evidently the main point. The programme did not demand that the party be invited to join the Cabinet—perhaps the ICP hoped that a constituent assembly would be elected in the near future.

The note of ill-concealed impatience vis-a-vis the regime which pervades the document isolates it both from the good will otherwise shown in the first phase of the communist advance and from the noisy and aggressive support marking the second. By the early autumn the party leadership must have been incensed at Qassem's reluctance to enter into a fighting alliance with the ICP against the "rightist nationalist circles." These doubts and their attendant bad feelings were dispelled when the Aref and Rashid 'Alī crises forced Qassem's hand.

* * *

A considerable number of dedicated pro-communists had been appointed to senior positions in government departments or government-directed corporations during the first months after the revolution. The ground was thus prepared for the next phase of the communist advance, although the significance of most of the appointments was not immediately clear.

A particularly important figure was Lt.-Col.—soon Colonel—Waṣfī Ṭāhir, Qassem's principal aide-de-camp. Waṣfī had held the same post under Nuri, so that his was not strictly a "new appointment," but it assumed

¹⁰ *Iraqi Review*, July 30, 1959.

an entirely new character. Like Maḥdāwī and Mājīd Amīn, after a few months Waṣfī became identified with the communists through associating in their company and talking their language. Also like Maḥdāwī and Amīn, he was never an ICP member, and once Qassem had decided to reduce communist influence to insignificance Waṣfī no longer counted as a supporter, although his public image as a dyed-in-the-wool communist remained.

In addition, there fell to the communists three key positions entailing the direction and management of public opinion, including that of the army. At the beginning of August the military censorship was delegated to Col. Luṭfī Tāhīr, a veterinary surgeon and brother of Waṣfī. At about the same time Maj. Salīm al-Fakhrī, a recently returned exile, was appointed director of broadcasting. Another ex-officer, Col. Ṭaha al-Shaykh Aḥmad, was appointed director of military planning at the General Staff; reports soon credited him as being responsible for Qassem's private intelligence service. Of these three it appears that Fakhrī was the only card-carrying communist. Until the ICP lost its preeminence in the summer of 1959, the two others publicly flaunted their support of the communist cause as party members rarely cared to do. The programmes of Baghdad Radio were showing unmistakable signs of communist influence by September 1958. Although Fakhrī's immediate superior, the director-general of guidance and broadcasting, Gharbī al-Ḥājj Aḥmad, was an unaffiliated Arab nationalist, he allowed himself to be put on ice shortly after the revolution; his recorded utterances, after the initial encomiums of Abdel Nasser had been delivered, were few and far between. On these terms he was permitted to survive in his post for the while¹¹.

During this time the military censorship under Luṭfī was tightened up, and it was given full authority to control all items destined for publication throughout the country¹².

Two other communists placed near the centre of power during the early days of the revolution should be mentioned here: Maj. Ghaḍbān al-Sa'd, who was an old personal friend of Qassem and had been removed from the army by Nuri, returned from exile, and was appointed Qassem's military secretary. In a higher and more conspicuous position was Col. Jalāl al-Awqātī, Commander of the Air Force throughout Qassem's regime. In contrast to the other officers mentioned, he did not generally act beyond the performance of his professional duties.

A prominent communist sympathizer appointed to a top government

¹¹ He became a Cabinet member under 'Abd al-Raḥmān 'Ārif.

¹² *R. Baghdad*, Sept. 21 [23], 1958.

post was 'Abd al-Fattāḥ Ibrāhīm, owner of the al-Rābiṭa press and one-time chairman of the leftist Ittihad Waṭani Party. He was made director of the Government Oil Refineries.

* * *

Like other communist parties under non-communist regimes, the ICP expended great efforts on the nursing of front organizations and other formally neutral bodies which might be turned to its own purposes. Many such "national organizations" existed in Qassem's Iraq; they were a factor of considerable importance in the history of the regime, primarily in conjunction with the fortunes of the communist movement. However, since they came to the fore only when the communist challenge had become dominant on the political scene, towards the end of 1958, their treatment is better deferred. An exception is the Popular Resistance Force (henceforth PRF), first raised by the government shortly after the revolution and for some months afterwards not obviously under communist influence.

The idea of a popular militia to fight "imperialism" at home was not native to Iraq. In the Middle East such a force had been levied in Egypt, Syria and Lebanon during the years preceding the Iraqi revolution at times of crisis involving a possible or actual invasion by Western powers. In Iraq itself the PRF had a predecessor in Yūnis al-Sab'āwī's ultra-nationalist "youth battalions" during Rashid 'Ālī's heyday. So far, the formation of a PRF could be regarded as a natural sequel to the July 14 revolution. That the communists gained control over the PRF in Iraq was due in part to their purposeful exertions and in part to political developments in general.

From the start the pressure exerted for the creation of the force can be traced directly to communist manipulation.

It was a measure advocated by the ICP, on July 14 (see above). During the first three days after the revolution petitions for the formation of a PRF were publicized over Baghdad Radio. Some of these appeals literally repeated the operative phrases of the ICP memorandum; all bore the stamp of the communist-inspired pronouncements in Iraq: "In order to defend our great republic and revolution and exterminate treacherous reaction, and in order that we may be ready at any time to face the enemy in our beloved homeland, we . . . request the immediate formation of popular resistance groups and the distribution of arms amongst us so that we may stand shoulder to shoulder with our victorious army."

The pressure must have been great, and evidently threatened to get out of control, for late on July 17 Qassem, in his capacity of Commander-

in-Chief of the Armed Forces, issued the following proclamation: "The government has decided to form popular resistance units to stand by the army in the defence of the homeland. The matter requires careful organization and supervision from the government. . . Citizens will be asked to join the popular units as soon as all necessary preparations. . . are completed. . . We warn the people against obeying any other call which is not issued from us." This proclamation registered the ambivalent attitude which the regime was to retain towards the PRF throughout the latter's existence: it recognized that the formation of "popular resistance units" was a logical product of the revolution which could not well be suppressed; on the other hand, the PRF might become an incubus easier to conjure up than to exorcise.

In a Military Governor General's Proclamation issued by 'Abdī on July 20 both aspects are revealed. Repeating the government's blessing of the proposed PRF and expressing its determination to form a force "in the very near future," it stated that "some citizens" had opened recruiting offices without authorization. Since these citizens could not provide the necessary standard of organization and administration they were asked to close the offices "immediately," upon pain of severe punishment.

How justified the authorities were in their apprehensions is made clear from a Cairo Radio report on July 21 that "Iraqi citizens in their tens of thousands" were streaming into PRF registration centres—the same centres that 'Abdī had ordered should be closed down the day before.

The government kept its word. On August 1 the Popular Resistance Law was promulgated. The following summarizes its main provisions:

"Popular military organizations called 'Popular Resistance Forces' were to be formed and attached to the Ministry of Defence (section 1). ✓

The task of the PRF was defined as the military training of the citizen so that he might aid the regular army "in civil defence, the maintenance of internal security and the defence of the country, subject to the directions issued by the Armed Forces Command" (section 2).

The PRF was to consist of: "(a) Female and male Iraqi volunteers"; (b) Soldiers, non-commissioned officers, warrant officers and reserve officers not on active service; (c) Volunteers from Arab and other countries, "with the approval of the Armed Forces Command" (section 3).

The Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces had "the right to terminate contracts at will" (section 7).

PRF members were "subject to all the military penal regulations" (section 11).

Two points should be singled out for comment. First, the express inclusion of women volunteers was a provision quite in keeping with the spirit of the revolution and the convictions of its main exponents—the communists, the nationalists and Qassem personally—but it was to do the PRF much harm among the public; secondly, the law was careful to ensure, so far as it possibly could, that the PRF would remain firmly under the control of the authorities.

* * *

Recruitment of the PRF officially commenced in Baghdad on August 9 and in other towns a few weeks later. Col. Shākir 'Alī was appointed its commander. Before the first training course started, he released some details about its programme. The initial training period was to last for thirty consecutive days, with two hours' training daily. This would be given in the late afternoon in order not to interrupt normal working hours. No uniform would be worn. Courses for volunteer PRF instructors and for women were being prepared¹³.

Volunteering was brisk. During the first fortnight ten thousand men and one thousand women enlisted; by the beginning of November, twenty thousand men and three thousand women were reported under training. The training concentrated on drill and small-arms practice; no field exercises took place. The principal instructors were regular army officers and non-commissioned officers; their assistants were civilian volunteers. The units, of platoon size, elected their own commanders. Arms were issued by the military authorities to the PRF depots, where they were under the control of army personnel and had to be returned after training or duty. Some kind of uniform was devised of khaki denims with a PRF armlet.

At first the PRF was not unduly disturbed by politics. The communist front organizations exerted their influence to persuade their members and sympathizers to join *en masse*¹⁴, while at the other end of the scale Aref publicly voiced his hope to see the formation of a "popular resistance, boys and girls, for the establishment of Arab unity¹⁵."

It was announced by Dr. Jābir 'Umar, the pro-Nasser Minister of Education, that his ministry would coordinate the work of the PRF with that

¹³ *Bilād*, Aug. 18, 1958.

¹⁴ *R. Baghdad*, Aug. 9 [11], 1958.

¹⁵ *R. Baghdad*, Aug. 15 [18], 1958.

of the *Futūwa*, to be set up shortly¹⁶. The Iraqi *Futūwa* youth organization had played an important background role in the 1930s when, under the guidance of Dr. Sāmī Shawkat, it had served to emphasize the fascist propensities of Arab nationalism as it was then understood. Now its reestablishment was suggested, as the minister indicated, to counteract the growing communist influence on school youth. With 'Umar's dismissal soon afterwards, nothing more was heard of the project.

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In the mass processions which ensued after Aref's arrest on November 4 the PRF as yet played no part. A month later publicity was given to the assistance which the PRF would render during a Winter Relief Week, to be organized by the Ministry of Social Affairs. The campaign took place as planned. The PRF roamed the streets with such devotion that 'Abdī felt constrained to issue a proclamation warning against the exploitation of Winter Relief Week "for purposes alien to this project"¹⁷.

There was much distress to be relieved in Iraq everywhere and in any season, and the ministry was no doubt motivated by good intentions. However, the campaign could also provide an outlet for the energies of a mass organization that was threatening to grow beyond control. On testing, the PRF proved that the time for its employment as a nonpolitical charity concern was past. The Rashīd 'Alī crisis soon diverted its activities to a purpose more congenial to its unofficial promoters and managers.

¹⁶ *R. Damascus*, Sept. 5 [8], 1958.

¹⁷ *IT*, Dec. 4, 1958.

CHAPTER 9 FROM AREF'S ARREST TO SHAWWĀF'S REVOLT—THE COMMUNIST ADVANCE

Soon after Aref's arrest foreign newspapers were notifying their readers that "Iraq goes red." This interpretation of events was never to pass entirely unchallenged, but by the earlier months of 1959 it certainly represented the majority opinion of observers everywhere, including the communists themselves. A tremendous communist offensive had been launched among all sectors of the public, and in a short time a no less tremendous advance had been achieved.

It was manifestly Qassem's good will which made the communist offensive possible. The alliance, as can be seen now, was much more restricted than it then appeared. However, the impression that Qassem was a communist collaborator lived on long after circumstances had changed, and made an important difference to the history of his regime.

The key to understanding this alignment is the chain reaction set in motion by the original fall from grace of the nationalists, the supporters of "Unity" with the UAR. Once Qassem's determined hostility was recognized, they went into opposition. Disaffection was rapidly polarized. Attempts to manipulate events behind the scenes developed into shadowy "plots," easily frustrated; treasonable contacts were then established; effective preparations for action came to fruition in full-scale revolt. Qassem's initial apprehensions had driven him to rely on the communists, the most resolute upholders of Iraqi independence from Cairo. As each nationalist failure led to a more determined assault on the regime, so Qassem's need of support grew, and the communists were quick to press their advantage. At length, the nationalists staked everything on the Shawwāf revolt in March 1959, and lost. The communists began to call openly for admission to office. Qassem now had to shift his front—but he would have to tread softly, for the communists were still his ultimate standby against "Unity," and the nationalists might still be able to stage a comeback.

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The news of Aref's arrest had been broadcast on the evening of November 4. On the following morning and for many days huge crowds marched

through Baghdad and other centres calling for Aref's death and cheering Qassem, the "Sole Leader." This new description was circulated by the communists eager to detract from the prestige of Abdel Nasser, to bolster Qassem's morale, and to associate Qassem with their own cause in the public mind. Within a few weeks Qassem's new appellation became current far beyond leftist circles; probably because by then it was considered dangerous to ignore.

The banners flown at one of the demonstrations urged¹:

Long live the sole leader 'Abd al-Karīm Qassem!
Long live the democratic leader 'Abd al-Karīm Qassem!
Eternal glory to the victims from our people!
Long live our free democratic republic!
Beware of the dissension-sowing supporters of imperialism!
Long live the United National Front!
Carry out the death sentences against traitors and criminals in order
to strengthen our republic!
Hang the criminals to avenge the victims who fell!
The people stands behind you! Hit at the conspirators!
The people demand the heads of the traitors!
Long live Arab-Kurdish unity!
Long live the solidarity between army and people!
Our just demand—hang the traitors!
Long live the Arab peoples' struggle for freedom and independence!
Long live the solidarity of the Republic of Iraq with the UAR and the
liberated Arab states!
The intrigues of imperialism will be wrecked on the rock of Arab-Kurdish
unity!

"Unity" applying to Arab-Kurdish relations, and "solidarity" to Iraqi-UAR relations, formed another of the nuances, guileless at the surface, with which anti-UAR propaganda in Iraq abounded at that time.

Occasions for demonstrating loyalty to the republic were numerous; apart from their political aspect they had a festive air and evidently fulfilled a real psychological need².

There were no anti-communist counter-processions. Until the Shawwāf revolt, however, brawls and clashes on a large scale between the communists

¹ *Bilād*, Nov. 26, 1958.

² Vernier, *op. cit.*, (pp. 202–3) remarks that under the monarchy there were all too few festivals to help the people forget for a day the misery and boredom of their lives.

and their enemies took place in areas where the latter were strong: at A'zamiyya; in the region of the Upper Euphrates; at Mosul, with its strong Syrian affiliations; in Najaf and Karbala, where the fiercely anti-communist Shi'i *mujtahidūn* had a strong hold over at least part of the population; at Kirkuk where the Turcoman sector was anti-communist, partly because of its Turkish sympathies, but chiefly because the Turcomans identified the communists with their hereditary enemies, the Kurds. Many of the clashes were bloody. According to a contemporary Iraqi estimate, ten people lost their lives during the last week of December 1958 alone³.

The attitude of the authorities was ambivalent. Clearly, the mass gatherings constituted a danger to public peace and a challenge to those responsible for it; on the other hand, they were politically important for Qassem. Bans on street gatherings and processions are on record, but they were certainly not enforced. After the beginning of December the popular turnouts were regularized under the auspices of the PRF.

* * *

The visit of William Rountree, US Assistant Secretary of State for the Near East and South Asia, deserves special mention. He arrived in the Middle East on December 8 for a tour of Arab capitals. His mission was to explain American policy in the area and improve the atmosphere after the bad publicity which the United States had generally received in the Arab states after the landings of marines in the Lebanon during the crisis of early July.

Rountree arrived on December 15 in Baghdad, his last stop. His visit could not be predicted as a hopeless undertaking. Qassem had no anti-American bias comparable to his suspicions of British "intrigue," and his recent rapprochement with the communist bloc made it especially desirable to keep on good terms with the USA. This was all the more reason for the communists to sabotage the visit. Rountree's arrival was preceded by a campaign of hate in the press, in which all shades of opinion joined, for the remaining anti-communist newspapers saw no reason to expose themselves to attack for the sake of an American representative.

On alighting from the aircraft Rountree was greeted by a chorus of airport personnel chanting "Plotter Rountree go home!" The vehicle which conveyed him into town was pelted by a screaming multitude. Rountree met Qassem the next day, and the official communiqué stressed the friendly atmosphere of Rountree's mission, which would serve "to

³ *Ahālī—Mid. Mir.*, Jan. 4, 1959.

strengthen the links of friendship." The communiqué was broadcast over Baghdad Radio—which for the last three months had been under communist direction—and a photograph showing Qassem and Rountree in friendly conversation was published the following day. These facts clearly demonstrated Qassem's determination to show that his will counted. Rountree departed on December 17 in a much quieter atmosphere than that in which he had arrived.

The episode in itself was unimportant and did not sour the relations between Qassem and the communists, both still in need of each other's support. Nevertheless it is the first known instance of a trial of strength between Qassem and the communists over a definite issue. The communists gave ground then, as they invariably were to do later.

* * *

In the meantime Baghdad Radio under Fakhri increasingly revealed its communist direction by the treatment of themes like "peace," the interpretation of such terms as "warmongers," or the commendatory attitude towards China, apart from the obvious show of adulation for the Sole Leader and the constant advocacy of an independent Iraq within the "Arab caravan." The news coverage paid disproportionate attention to the affairs of the communist bloc: interminable reports on the progress of light industry in Bulgaria for instance, must have bored the Iraqi listener to distraction. Broadcast of press excerpts leant heavily on the newspapers of the left. *Ittihad al-Sha'b*, the official ICP organ, was generally given pride of place as soon as it had made its appearance.

The attitude of Baghdad Radio towards the UAR reflected the development of communist-UAR relations. From cautious reserve in November it progressed through quasi-incredulous indignation at Cairo's growing hostility to Baghdad, to outbursts of open spite in January and February, now and again paying lip service to the cause of Arab solidarity without surrendering the fundamental issue of Iraqi independence. As yet Abdel Nasser's person was respected.

The press presented a more complex picture than the communist-orientated Baghdad Radio. In the period between November 1958 and March 1959 an unusual diversity of political opinion was offered.

The revolution stimulated the publication of a number of new periodicals, and the reactivation of others that had been suppressed under Nuri. The Ba'thi *al-Jumhuriyya* was involved in Aref's downfall and was closed

on November 5, the day after his detention. It did not reappear for the duration of Qassem's regime. Most of its staff were arrested; Dr. Ḥamādī, the chief editor, managed to escape abroad.

Al-Zamān and the *Iraq Times*, two staid survivors from the monarchy, were supposedly independent, but by the end of 1958 both had become fellow-travellers, accepting the communist line without reservation, although not taking over its harsh tones. *Al-Bilād* had been sharply leftist since the late summer of 1958. The following months saw the reappearance of *Ṣawt al-Aḥrār*, *al-Istiqlāl*, *al-Akḥbār* and *al-Raqīb*. The titles of the first two evoked memories of earlier newspapers associated with the Aḥrār (Liberal) and Istiqlāl parties respectively; in fact it soon became clear that all four were pro-communist. Some kind of internal takeover occurred in a number of these dailies, with a communist action group among the staff assuming the dictation of policy. *Ṣawt al-Aḥrār* in particular became the unofficial organ of the ICP before the licensing of *Ittiḥād al-Sha'b*, and remained the mouthpiece of certain communist leaders afterwards as well. *Al-Ra'y al-'Āmm* was stamped as pro-communist by the identity of its publisher Muḥammad Maḥdī al-Jawāhirī, a noted poet who held strong leftist views. Destined to be of great significance was *al-Thawra*, first published in October 1958 by Yūnis al-Ṭā'ī, a newcomer in the publishing field. The paper was expected to adhere to the National Democratic line but soon became indistinguishable from the most extreme journals of the left.

The true mouthpiece of the NDP was *al-Aḥālī*, first published on November 30, 1958, heir to the NDP *Ṣawt al-Aḥālī*, which had been suspended in 1954. *Al-Aḥālī* began by showing friendliness to the communists in conformance with NDP policy, which will be discussed later. On occasion, however, the paper pointed to objectionable developments, in a manner which, though measured, made *al-Aḥālī* the most effective critic of the communists in the Iraqi press.

Despite the unpropitious ending of *al-Jumhūriyya*, the nationalists still had a good representation. *Al-Ḥurriyya* and Shanshal's *al-Yaqza* appeared shortly after the revolution: of the two, *al-Ḥurriyya* was the more outspoken. Between December 1958 and February 1959 they were joined by *al-Fajr al-Jadīd*, *al-Muwāṭin al-'Arabī*, and *Baghdād*. The devotion of all five to *qawmiyya* cannot be doubted. However, they were circumspect. They rarely showed their sympathies by anything more dangerous than enthusiasm whenever there were signs of a *détente* between Baghdad and Cairo, and by a pronounced religious slant.

A paper that saw its *raison d'être* in religious conservatism was the weekly *Liwā' al-Ukhūwa al-Islamiyya*, established in December 1958; its publisher,

Shaykh Muḥammad Maḥmūd al-Ṣawwāf, was the foremost publicist of orthodoxy in the country.

All these periodicals paraded unqualified support of Qassem's regime. It was all the more startling, therefore, when at the end of February the editorials of *al-Fajr al-Jadīd* and *al-Muwāṭin al-'Arabī* came out in protest against the censorship which was arbitrarily altering reports and articles so that they no longer reflected the intentions of their authors. The leader writers charged that the censorship discriminated against a minority of newspapers while the "majority" was left alone. A remonstrance like this needed some courage, and retribution followed swiftly.

One gap was filled late. On January 24, 1959, the official organ of the ICP, *Ittiḥād al-Sha'b* (publisher and chief editor, 'Abd al-Qādir Ismā'īl al-Bustānī) appeared legally for the first time since its underground establishment in 1956. Qassem did not assent to its overt appearance lightly; he yielded only after protests had been made to him by the assembled communist leadership⁴.

* * *

The pretensions of the communists to represent intellectual Iraq were successfully demonstrated at two inter-Arab events which took place at the end of November and the end of December 1958, respectively. These were the Arab Lawyers' Conference at Baghdad and the Arab Literary Congress at Kuwait. On both occasions the Iraqi delegations were dominated by fellow-travellers who were hardly distinguishable from bona-fide party members. They became embroiled in noisy quarrels with the other delegates over questions related to the Iraqi communists' refusal to accept the UAR interpretation of Arab nationalism. Although the anti-communists among the Iraqi delegates may even have been more numerous they were evidently cowed, while noncommitted representatives went with the tide: the two conferences thus served to strengthen the impression in the Arab world that "the communists had captured the Iraqi regime⁵."

* * *

The phenomenal growth of the ICP during the months after the revolution led to serious organizational difficulties which distracted the attention of the party leadership just when its political opportunities became most

⁴ See *Zamān*, Dec. 5, 1958.

⁵ *Hawl al-'Ālam*, Dec. 11, 1958.

dazzling. While the experience of the ICP and its ability to play a dominant role in national life had indeed increased, the party was not adequately equipped to cope with the immensity of the new tasks that lay ahead.

The situation was reviewed in retrospect in the Report of the Central Committee of the ICP of July 1959⁶. According to this diagnosis, "the party leadership noted that the qualitative development in the party as a whole lagged behind its numerical growth." This condition "led to a weakening in the ability of the organizations to grasp the party's ideology and policy, and therefore weakened the guidance which they could have exercised on the masses in face of the pressure from the spontaneous movement [i.e., the propensity of the masses to get out of hand—see below, p. 228]. Thus some comrades behaved not as leaders of the masses, but as individuals on the level of the non-party masses with little [ideological] consciousness. Some party committees were swamped by their daily work to the extent that they sometimes neglected their monthly reports. Organizational, and especially educational, party meetings no longer proceeded properly..."

Weakness of supervision and control was noted: "Some party committees at different levels would hold meetings, take a decision and meet again a few days later without reviewing what they had decided or implemented, and would still take new decisions... Many party members who had committed political or organizational mistakes were left without having been called to account, or without disciplinary measures having been inflicted upon them."

The party leadership had been prompt to issue directives aimed at tightening supervision and restoring discipline. In addition, a temporary halt to party membership was called and a training programme enjoined. A ban of three months (originally two months) was imposed on nomination for party membership, as from January 14, 1959. The cooption of "workers of large enterprises and poor peasants" was excepted. The pause was designed to give the party a respite during which to digest its recent acquisitions. Although the exception could imperil the effectiveness of the measure, it was meant to increase the proportion of ICP members belonging to the "toiling communities greatest in number and most revolutionary of all." An "educational campaign" was organized in November 1958 to last between a fortnight and a month. It was an internal affair for the enlightenment of party members, candidates and known supporters. "Only the most important issues confronting the national (*waṭaniyya*) movement"

⁶ *CC Report*, pp. 7–8. See also "For Better Inner Party Work," *WMR*, May 1959, pp. 66–8. The following description of remedial measures is also from *CC Report*.

were dealt with at this stage: the meaning of the revolution; the duties imposed by the revolution on the ICP as standard-bearer and peacemaker of the "progressive forces"; the dangers of "fake nationalism." Early in 1959 the educational campaign was broadened, and perhaps to some extent blurred, by extending the curriculum to all the issues then exercising the party. Both stages of the programme involved courses to which students were summoned by the central committee. According to later party critics, the courses suffered from a scarcity of devoted instructors.

Throughout this period of growth and activity, the ICP never gained official recognition, but its anonymity was wearing thin. At the end of January the party was represented at the Twenty-first Congress of the CPSU in Moscow by the ICP secretary, who received publicity in Iraq under his party pseudonym, Salām 'Ādil. The mass rallies which took place in Baghdad, communist in everything but their billing, were addressed by prominent party veterans such as 'Abd al Qādir Ismā'īl and 'Azīz al-Hājj.

So long as the public peace was not too flagrantly violated, the authorities did not interfere with these activities. When riots did occur, or when molestation or terrorization of the citizen became too blatant, the blame could always be put on the Popular Resistance Force or the Students Federation.

* * *

On January 14, 1959, an act of reparation was given effect that must have rejoiced the heart of every Iraqi communist. The committee constituted under the Law for the Pardon of Political Offenders, 1958, established that three communists, hanged in 1949 under sentence of the Supreme Court, had fought for the liberation of Iraq. These were Yūsuf Salmān Yūsuf, then secretary of the Iraqi Communist Party and known as "Fahd", Zakī Muḥammad Basīm, and Ḥusayn Muḥammad al-Shabībī, members of its political bureau. They were rehabilitated as "national strugglers".⁷

* * *

⁷ *Zamān*, Jan. 26, 1959; *Jarida*, Beirut, Jan. 27, 1959.

Four communists, and not three, had then gone to the gallows. But the ministerial committee did not consider Yahūdā Ṣadiq a suitable name for rehabilitation. The ICP also ignored its Jewish martyr whenever it paid tribute to his comrades afterwards. Whether it did so out of moral cowardice, or because he had turned King's evidence during the trial, must remain a matter for conjecture.

After the revolution the United National Front, constituted of the four still illegal opposition parties—the NDP, Istiqlāl, ICP and Ba‘th—was occasionally invoked by its constituent bodies. This was no more than token acknowledgment, however, that the UNF had given its blessing to some “national achievement.” The UNF had never been a closely coordinated body with a positive policy of its own, and therefore was unable to act in its own name when solidarity might have counted. Later the ICP put the blame for this impotence on the Ba‘th, which had “ever since the first days of the revolution...walked out of the UNF to attain private gains”; in other words, it had pressed for “Unity now” to which its partners in the UNF would not accede⁸. This may be so. However, probably more significant is that the ICP regained interest in the UNF only towards the end of 1958 when there was a reasonable chance that the communists would be the dominant partner in a rejuvenated front.

In a mass procession on November 5, a streamer was brandished with the slogan: “Forge a United National Front for the defence of the Republic!” This was given prominence by communist sources, and within ten days the demand had been fulfilled.

On November 16, the four partners of the UNF announced that they had signed a new covenant to replace that of 1956. Its main points were⁹:

- 1) The front would strive to advance Arab nationalism: “The UNF will work especially for the establishment of the closest relations with the UAR, on the condition that established democratic methods are observed.”
- 2) The UNF saw Arabs and Kurds as partners in the homeland (*waṭan*) and “recognized their national rights within the unity of Iraq.”
- 3) The UNF supported Positive Neutralism.
- 4) The UNF would promote industrialization.
- 5) The covenant constituted a permanent alliance.

The signatories were Chaderchi and Ḥadīd for the NDP, Kubba and Shanshal for the Istiqlāl, Rikābī for the Ba‘th and ‘Āmir ‘Abdallah for the ICP. The signatures were not published with the covenant, since political parties were legally still in abeyance.

The terms of the covenant make communist influence clear.

Party grouping within the UNF at this stage can be easily outlined.

⁸ *Iraqi Review*, Sept. 6, 1959.

⁹ For the full text see *Bilād*, Nov. 26, 1958.

The NDP followed the communists as did the United Democratic Party of Kurdistan, soon admitted as the fifth partner, probably in December. The Istiqlāl had ceased to be a political party in any real sense, even by Iraqi standards. An observation that its three-man leadership of Kubba, Sāmarrā'ī and Shanshal was all that remained of the party is almost the literal truth¹⁰. The Ba'th was already under a heavy cloud, though with its regional secretary still in the Cabinet it was not as yet proscribed.

In these circumstances the scope of the UNF was severely limited. It could only serve as yet another vehicle for communist-directed demonstrations and declarations. A popular "congress" was held on November 24, when the history of the UNF and its aims were explained to the public. The resignation of the Ba'th and Istiqlāl ministers from the Cabinet on February 7, 1959 (see below, p. 152) made it impossible to keep up the pretence, and the Shawwāf revolt set the seal on its disintegration. Although the communists had lost a convenient cover, in the circumstances the UNF could have no *raison d'être*. Indeed, another attempt was later made to resurrect it, but its concept then was quite different.

* * *

There were three communist front organizations *par excellence* in Iraq: the Peace Partisans, the League for the Defence of Women's Rights and the Federation of Democratic Youth.

The ICP did not acknowledge these organizations as offspring, although it never relinquished control over them. Thus the party membership of 'Azīz Sharif and Dr. Naziha al-Dulaymī, chairmen of the Peace Partisans and the Women's League respectively, was never expressly admitted.

The three organizations had existed for a number of years before the revolution. They had been set up as part of the Soviet attempt after World War II to harness the humanitarian trends of the time to their global policy. In Iraq they went underground after the reaction of 1953-54 and were hunted down with varying degrees of intensity. Both the Peace Partisans and the Women's League sent the new government their congratulations on the day of the revolution, thus registering their prior existence¹¹. By October the Peace Partisans felt themselves established firmly enough to send an official delegation to Moscow. The Women's League soon organized teams in urban and rural areas to visit homes and explain the significance of the revolution in communist terms.

¹⁰ Durra, *Al-Qaḍiyya al-kurdiyya*, pp. 140-1. One might add Salmān al-Ṣafwānī, editor of *al-Yaqza*.

¹¹ *Iraqi Review*, July 30, 1959.

After Aref's arrest the Peace Partisans began to fill the role of an ostensibly non-party mass organization giving expression to the people's voice. A demand that they pressed insistently was for the secession of Iraq from the Baghdad Pact—of which she was formally still a member. During January and February large rallies of the Peace Partisans took place in Diwaniya, Karbala, Hilla and elsewhere. They were to be crowned by a massive concourse at Mosul on March 6. This was the occasion that precipitated the Shawwāf revolt.

The League for the Defence of Women's Rights obtained official sanction during this period. Its first national conference convened at Baghdad on March 8–12, 1959, with 240 delegates for 25,000 members, in the presence of Qassem and deputations from most communist countries, including China. Dr. Dulaymī was predictably elected chairman; other names on the executive committee—Ibtihāj al-Awqātī, Salīma al-Fakhri, 'Afīfa al-Bustānī—are interesting testimony to the continuing pull of family in the political life of Iraq¹².

The Federation of Democratic Youth expanded its activities throughout the country without any attempt at concealment, but it did not obtain official recognition until March 1959.

* * *

The role of the Popular Resistance Force in Iraq under Qassem soon became identified as that of a people's militia under communist direction, keeping a frightened public in a state of terror.

Shortly after Aref's arrest, the para-communist press were claiming that the PRF must be regarded as the "second army" of the state and would furnish proof of the people's solidarity against all who plotted against the country's independence and sovereignty. This conception of the functions of the PRF tallies with later information published by the ICP about decisions taken at a meeting of its central committee around this time¹³.

The first opportunity for taking practical steps came on December 8 with Qassem's call for vigilance against traitors, after the discovery of Rashid 'Alī's plot.

This was the cue the ICP had needed. Within hours the PRF was roaming the streets of Baghdad. The account of a Chinese eye-witness is of interest:

¹² The wives of the Commander of the Iraqi Air Force and of the Director of Broadcasting, and the sister of the editor of *Ittihad al-Sha'b*, respectively; all communists.

¹³ *CC Report*, p. 3.

"On December 9 driving...at night, this correspondent saw army men and members of the PRF patrolling the streets and searching passing cars. At one place a long row of cars was detained. In Rashid Street, the main street of Baghdad, a car sped by a guard post obviously trying to escape the anticipated search. The man on watch shouted to call the attention of the next post while five cars including [indistinct word] and private cars chased after it. At the Jumhūriyya Bridge over the Tigris this correspondent met the young man, Ṣalāḥ Dāwūd, who succeeded in catching the fleeing car. Dāwūd, who works at the Baghdad power plant, had one of the fingers of his right hand injured in the [scuffle?] that followed. The patrols stopped searching the car this correspondent was driving; when they came to know his identity they told him that the Iraqi people believed that the Chinese people were their friends for life¹⁴."

From then on the PRF's watch over the republic increased and was extended to centres outside Baghdad. The complaint that "they meddled in everything" is an understatement: the PRF did not confine itself to meddling, for it enjoyed unlimited powers to arrest "suspected plotters," either through instructions to the local police, no less effective for being unauthorized, or by direct action and the use of improvised prisons¹⁵. Its members stormed coffeeshops known as nationalist strongholds. Their peddling of the portraits of communist heroes was tantamount to the levying of contributions. Girls joined in action, and this not unnaturally gave rise to stories of shocking promiscuity—probably apocryphal, but damaging just the same. The PRF activities were extended to private homes as well as to public places.

One charge rarely made against the PRF was that of banditry for the sake of personal gain. A communist claim that "never were there so few burglaries committed in Baghdad as during the time of their activity" seems to be justified. But the exercise of virtue through terror has never been endearing.

On January 14, 1959, after a month of this "vigilance," Qassem found it necessary to issue a directive intended for the PRF¹⁶. It hit the exact note—compounded of sternness, sense and understanding—which was to characterize Qassem's later addresses to the communists:

"Although we appreciate the great and valuable efforts which the dear citizens belonging to the PRF, the General Federation of Students and

¹⁴ *NCNA*, Dec. 10 [11], 1958.

¹⁵ A Lebanese pro-Nasser daily gave the total of *qawmiyyin* imprisoned by the PRF at the time as 700 (*Kifāh*, Jan. 20, 1959).

¹⁶ *Zamān*, Jan. 15, 1959.

the other national organizations have shown, certain regrettable incidents have recently occurred, disturbing the peace and harming the people's interests. These incidents were caused by certain elements who are trying to fish in troubled waters...All the citizens should know that the safety of the republic is above all...other considerations.

"...Individual freedom and freedom of ownership are guaranteed by the Provisional Constitution. The necessary instructions have been issued to the armed forces and security forces to preserve these freedoms. We shall not hesitate to punish severely all those who try to harm the republic's name and safety and disturb freedom and the people. The PRF, the General Federation of Students and the other national elements shall be on duty [i.e., active service]—

"In time of war—air raid precautions, homeguard and auxiliary police duties, all under the direction of the armed forces command.

"At other times, during a state of emergency *as defined by the competent military authorities*" (present author's italics).

"The PRF [etc.] shall not carry out any activities before receiving a clear order from the General Command of the Armed Forces or the Military Governor General...PRF members on active service will be supplied with special documents. These will be distributed when the situation described in this proclamation has arisen ..."

The orthodox, army-sponsored training programme of the PRF was continued and, it seems, intensified—probably both to show that there was no ill-feeling and to keep the force out of mischief. Also at this stage the organization was extended to the four northern—largely Kurdish—provinces of Kirkuk, Mosul, Sulaimaniya and Erbil.

The lessening of PRF activity was transient. When the feeling of crisis was renewed shortly afterwards, at the beginning of February, with the pronouncement of judgment on Aref and the resignation from the government of the anti-communist ministers, the PRF returned to the streets in full force and freedom. The Shawwāf revolt, a month later, served to emphasize its importance to the regime in a genuine emergency.

The virtual transformation of the PRF into a communist front organization was underlined by the replacement in January 1959 of its first commander, Col. Shākir 'Alī. His successor was Col. Ṭaha al-Bāmīrī, the Kurdish ex-battalion commander of the Royal Guards Brigade. He was not an ICP member, but in communist eyes figured as "a good man."

* * *

A self-styled higher committee for the Iraqi Students Federation had called on the youth of the country to join the PRF as early as the beginning of August 1958¹⁷. This unrecognized body had appeared in the demonstrations after Aref's arrest and thus identified itself with the communist cause. Official recognition of the federation took some months, but had been accorded before the Shawwāf revolt. Meanwhile the nascent student body identified itself with the PRF activities.

There may have been several reasons why the attitude of the authorities to the federation was at first ambivalent. For one, the political sympathies of the senior personnel at the Ministry of Education were divided. Secondly, and this was the decisive consideration, Qassem must have recognized the danger of delivering the student population to communist leadership, although he would not wish to deter a potential ally against the more immediately dangerous forces of *wahda*.

Some figures bearing on political trends among the students during this period are available.

During the second week of November, the Cabinet authorized the formation of a General Students Federation to be the sole representation of secondary-school and university students in Iraq. The aims of the federation, as then envisaged by the Minister of Education, were clearly to discourage the traditional obsession of Arab students with politics. These objectives were described in an approving newspaper comment as "enabling the students to organize their social and cultural activities on a non-partisan basis"¹⁸.

However, other needs and interests soon prevailed. The preparatory committee, charged with organizing the elections to a constituent conference, was elected on November 22. These preliminary elections had been managed by the existing unofficial organization, whose leading members were predictably returned to the preparatory committee. The committee then proceeded to pick safe candidates for the main elections.

The nationalist students—apparently organized on the merest *ad hoc* basis—protested, and at the same time declared their determination to boycott the elections to the constituent conference. A committee appointed by the Ministry of Education to examine nationalist complaints, under the chairmanship of the leftist Dr. Ṣalāḥ Khalīṣ, upheld the preparatory committee. The ministry also disfranchised non-Iraqi students, probably because they were more liable to sympathize with "Unity" or at least would serve to keep the issue to the fore. Meanwhile the press and radio did not give space to opposition opinions.

¹⁷ *IT*, Aug. 7, 1958.

¹⁸ *Zamān*, Nov. 17, 1958.

The elections took place in mid-December. The published results include a record of 6,014 students who had the right to vote; 3,936 voted for the leftist candidates put before them, while 1,726 "boycotted" the elections, i.e., put blank or defaced ballots into the box¹⁹. The newly appointed rector of Baghdad University, Dr. 'Abd al-Jabbār 'Abdallah, cooperated with the leftist elements.

When these results are considered, it must be remembered, first, that the elections were loaded in favour of the left: it takes more conviction to invalidate a paper than to mark it in favour of the approved candidate. Secondly, to the generality of students this can hardly have represented a straight issue between communism and "Nasserism"; many of the students who voted for communist candidates must have done so because the communists were as yet primarily associated with past struggles against oppression, whether political or social, rather than with a positive programme to seize office.

If these points are taken into account, the leftist and nationalist forces among the students at that stage seem fairly evenly divided. That victory had gone to the communists could partly be attributed to the interest of the regime. But their astuteness and energy in this, as in other matters, in contrast to the absence of direction manifest among their opponents cannot be ignored.

The federation held its first conference in Baghdad from February 16 to 21, 1959, attended by some four hundred delegates²⁰. This conference determined the character of the federation as a communist front organization. The preparatory committee had managed to ensure that an overwhelmingly leftist body of delegates was elected. A proposal to cable the communist-led International Union of Students (IUS), recognizing it as the only body representing world students, was unanimously endorsed, with six abstentions. Numerous guest delegations from the communist bloc were much applauded for the part they took in anti-imperialist debates. "Principles" and a constitution were adopted, the former stressing the "right of the Kurdish students to...their national culture and...a university in Kurdistan-Iraq." Other principles adopted the usual Iraqi communist formulae of seeming verbiage which in reality used technical terms well understood by the public: "full Iraqi Independence," "defense of democratic rights," "Arab solidarity," "world peace." The constitution limited full membership of the federation to Iraqi nationals. Mahdī 'Abd al-Karīm, an ICP member, was elected president.

¹⁹ *IT*; Dec. 18, 1958.

²⁰ *IT*, Feb. 13-23, 1959; *R. Baghdad*, Feb. 18 [20], 19 [21], 1959.

A UAR delegation, which arrived uninvited, walked out of the conference after a series of squabbles.

* * *

The origins of Iraqi trade unions date back to the late 1920s when the oil installations around Kirkuk and the rapidly developing communications system provided suitable ground. At first suppressed, the unions emerged into the open during the comparatively liberal period of government after World War II. They were again forbidden in 1953–54. With inconsiderable exceptions they remained inactive until the 1958 revolution, being largely, though not invariably, under communist influence.

From the first day of the revolution the ICP took upon itself the reconstitution of the trade unions²¹. Speedy initiative ensured the party leadership of the revived movement in every sphere. At first, the operation proceeded quietly, without propaganda or provocation by labour disputes. The government did not interfere, although at the beginning of September 1958 Nājī Ṭalib, Minister of Social Affairs, said in an interview that his ministry was giving “serious thought” to the establishment of trade unions, “forbidden under the old regime²².” In these conditions, therefore, when the ICP assumed the offensive, it could count on a rapidly ramifying trade union movement under its exclusive control. Some attempt was made by Ṭalib to extricate the movement from the communist orbit. On November 10 he gave orders to disband the preparatory committees which had been at work since the revolution²³. There is no evidence that they ceased to be active.

At the beginning of December, two ordinances designed to regulate the position of trade unions were published, “The Duties and Rights of Trade Unions,” on December 3, and “The Basic Internal Constitution of Trade Unions,” on December 6. The ordinances authorized the formation of trade unions, but at the same time manifested the government’s concern to prevent the movement from serving as yet another communist tool. There were strict provisions concerning the licensing and super-

²¹ On the evening of July 14 workers assembled at coffeehouses and places of work to reconstitute trade unions which had been dormant, and to found new ones; they were practically all active ICP members. There were no formal elections to committees; those who had taken upon themselves the initiative were recognized as leaders and representatives of each trade union. (Private information.)

²² *R. Baghdad*, Sept. 9 [11], 1958.

²³ *Ayyām*, Damascus, Nov. 11, 1958.

vision of the unions by the Ministry of Social Affairs. Limitation of membership to persons practising the trade of their particular union severely narrowed the possibilities of communist manipulation. Persons declared guilty in the past of a nonpolitical offence were not eligible for membership. This was an invidious reservation, since the old regime had often contrived to convict communists on criminal grounds.

The ministry did not consider applications for licences until late in January 1959. An article in the anti-communist *Al-Hurriyya* which stressed that the foremost duty of the unions was "to create and cultivate technical knowledge in the working class" clearly reflected the opinion of Nājī Ṭālib²⁴. The licensing of the first two unions was reported on February 8²⁵. From then on progress was rapid. By mid-February nineteen unions had been licensed—one in Basra and eighteen in Baghdad—and the applications of a further seventy were reported under consideration²⁶.

The constitution of a national federation was due. Although it had not yet been authorized, a self-styled "executive bureau of Iraqi Trade Unions" held a mass rally in Baghdad on February 20. The meeting was addressed by Ṣādiq al-Falāḥī, "chairman of the executive bureau," a leading ICP member and later to become chairman of the Iraqi Federation of Trade Unions. Among other speakers were 'Abd al-Qādir Ismā'il, Maḥdāwī and Mājid Amin. Greetings were sent to the communist-directed World Federation of Trade Unions. The "persecution of trade unions in the UAR" was condemned²⁷. Clearly, the attempt to depoliticize the trade unions had failed.

* * *

There had been "peasants societies" in Iraq before the revolution, but they were little more than insubstantial nuclei for the *jacqueries* during the 1950s. The first months after the revolution were too disturbed for serious organizational work. However, after January 1959 the authorities were bombarded with applications, said to have borne hundreds of thousands of signatures, for the licensing of peasants societies. The leftist press pointed out that the proposed societies would not be made redundant by the formation of cooperative societies envisaged under the Agrarian

²⁴ Quoted *R. Baghdad*, Jan. 22 [24], 1959.

²⁵ *Ḥayāt*, Feb. 8, 1959.

²⁶ *Mid. Mir.*, Feb. 22, 1959.

²⁷ *IT*, Feb. 22, 1959; *NCNA*, Feb. 20–22 [23], 1959.

Reform Law; with their "active leadership" said to be already crystallized, it could be predicted that they would have a great part to play. Precisely for that reason, one may conjecture, the Minister of Agriculture was not eager to comply with the requests, to the chagrin of the communists. The legalization of peasants societies was deferred, until after the Shawwāf revolt the pressure could no longer be ignored.

* * *

Iraqi professional organizations which had been legally constituted under the old regime, like the Medical Association, the Bar Association and the Chamber of Commerce, proved comparatively resistant to communist penetration. When they did fall under communist influence, it was only for a brief spell. On the other hand, bodies first formed after the revolution, such as the Teachers Union or the Journalists Association were communist-led from the outset. They became bastions of communism requiring all the resources of the authorities to break or at least to contain them.

The political importance of these organizations did not become apparent until the end of 1958, since members of the first group by nature dissociated themselves from politics as far as possible in the prevailing atmosphere, while the ICP bided its time.

The Teachers Union was born in the winter of 1958–59. Its formation was authorized, and its functions defined by a special law signed on November 6, 1958. The union was to include teachers of all grades—including university level—as well as Ministry of Education officials. The Minister of Education was designated responsible for the union, whereas trade unions proper were the province of the Ministry of Social Affairs.

Elections for the constituent conference took place on January 23, 1959. Of the three contending lists, the Unified Professional List—composed of communists and their sympathizers—gained a complete victory over the list put forward by the nationalists, with that of the "Independents" dragging in the rear. The UPL carried twelve of the fourteen provinces; the nationalists, significantly, Ramadi; the "Independents", Kirkuk²⁸. The communist victory conformed to the general trend. It was also undoubtedly due to the social structure of the union in which proletarian representation was far greater than in other professional organizations.

The constituent conference sat in Baghdad on February 2–6, 1959. It elected as president of the union Dr. Fayṣal al-Sāmīr, director-general of the Ministry of Education, a historian of some distinction, and a fair-

²⁸ *IT*, Jan. 21, 23, 25, 1959; *Mid. Mir.*, Jan. 25, 1959.

weather fellow-traveller. The two vice-presidents were 'Aziz al-Shaykh, a prominent communist, and Šiddiq al-'Atrūshī, not an ICP member, but a confirmed sympathiser. Communists and leftists also predominated in the permanent committees. Qassem, as an erstwhile teacher, was elected honorary president.

The Journalists Association became active later, after the Shawwāf revolt.

* * *

In August the ICP called into being a Liaison Committee in order to institutionalize the communist hold over the "national organizations." The committee was headed by Šādiq al-Falāhī; not all its members were communists—a few were ostensibly non-party or National Democrats—but as a whole it was plainly a party body.

The committee was not destined to live long. It was invoked most frequently after the Shawwāf revolt in the spring of 1959.

CHAPTER 10 A NATIONALIST INTERLUDE— RASHĪD 'ĀLĪ'S PLOT

On December 8, 1958, Baghdad Radio alerted the public to stand by for an "important statement to the people from the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces." Qassem then announced:

"With the help of Almighty God and the vigilance of the people, we have succeeded in discovering a serious plot which was to have been carried out on December 9–10, and which would have exposed the entity of our republic to danger and played havoc with the internal security of the country. The plot was the work of some corrupt elements, with the help of foreigners from outside Iraq. . .

"The evidence, and the money and arms which were to have been used for carrying out this plot are now in our possession, and the perpetrators of this plot have been referred to the people's court where they will be tried for treason against the homeland.

"We advise the people to increase their vigilance and caution for the sake of preserving public order from the foul deeds of subversive elements throughout our immortal republic."

There followed a televised exhibition of banknotes and small arms "seized from the plotters."

It was a sensational statement that gave little factual information. On the morrow the radio pinpointed "reactionary resistance to agrarian reform" and "fake nationalist slogans," which it described as "the principal factors. . . for criminal conspiratorial activities against our republic¹." For many weeks no Iraqi news source had any substantial facts to relate. The communists and their allies identified the Americans as the "foreigners outside Iraq" behind the plot. The United States was also blamed, for different reasons, by the UAR propaganda organs.

However, the less partisan news agencies soon gave away the gist of the

¹ The first list of landlords subjected to expropriation had been announced on December 7.

affair: Rashīd 'Ālī al-Gaylānī, veteran statesman and hero of the anti-British movement of 1941, had been arrested together with a number of civilians and army officers. The conspirators, alarmed at the growth of communist influence, had planned to depose Qassem and set up an Arab nationalist government headed by Rashīd 'Ālī².

On September 1, 1958, Rashīd 'Ālī al-Gaylānī had returned to Baghdad after an absence of seventeen years. The Government of National Defence he had headed in 1941 had been endorsed a forerunner of the revolution by Qassem himself. Rashīd 'Ālī, who had been living in Germany and Saudi Arabia before 1953, and subsequently in Egypt and Syria, was an uncompromising advocate of accession to the UAR. On the eve of his departure for Baghdad he gave an interview in which he stated simply and forcefully that "Iraqis feel that there must be complete unity with the UAR which will form the nucleus of comprehensive Arab unity. . . I have great hope that Baghdad today is as Damascus was four months ago³. . ." He did not say that he had already discussed the practical aspects of the matter with Abdel Nasser at a farewell interview, and had received the latter's assurance that the Iraqi region of the enlarged UAR would not be expected to contribute to the community chest out of its resources, except towards the upkeep of a unified army⁴. It is clear that Rashīd 'Ālī expected his ideas to be welcomed at home. It was a tribute to Qassem's ability to be all things to all men until his credit became exhausted.

On his arrival in Baghdad Rashīd 'Ālī was visited by Aref and briefly received by Qassem. The publication on September 4 of the Political Amnesty Law, which singled out "the revolution of April and May 1941 as an act of national struggle deserving the gratitude of the homeland," was a good portent of his return. Rashīd 'Ālī thereupon settled down to nurse his wishes to fruition.

* * *

The history of the plot may be pieced together from the records of the secret trials of Rashīd 'Ālī and two of his main associates, published about a year later.

Rashīd 'Ālī soon turned his home into a meeting place for his personal and political friends. As he saw the skies darken, his choice of contacts gained in significance. Rashīd 'Ālī's growing discomfiture was succinctly

² *R. Tehran*, Dec. 11 [12], 1958; *Mid. Mir.*, Dec. 14, 1958.

³ *MENA*, Sept. 1 [3], 1958.

⁴ *Protocols*, V, p. 107.

explained at his trial: he realized that Qassem was, and would always be, adamantly opposed to a political union between Iraq and the UAR; he feared communism and consequently feared for Islam; his resentment of agrarian reform derived from its social aspects at least as much as from its economic effects. Probably his disappointment at being overlooked, coupled with an over-estimation of both his influence and his capacity, should also be added.

During the first week of November, at about the time of Aref's return and arrest, his grievances led him to concentrate on possible action to redeem a situation which had now become "impossible." By then Rashīd 'Ālī had procured two close confidants and assistants, his nephew Mubdir al-Gaylānī and the advocate 'Abd al-Raḥīm al-Rāwī, of a highly respected family from the Upper Euphrates region. He looked for allies mainly among the tribal chiefs and army officers, together with members of the UAR embassy. The first two groups were coordinated by Rāwī, while Mubdir maintained links with the UAR diplomats.

Among the tribal representatives the most active conspirator was 'Abd al-Riḍā al-Ḥājī Sikkar of the Fatla in Diwaniya Province. He was not an owner of great estates, but his uncle was 'Abd al-Wāḥid al-Ḥājī Sikkar, a leader of the 1934-35 tribal insurrection⁵. It is clear from the evidence that a considerable number of tribal notables were contacted and gave the proposals a sympathetic hearing, while preferring for the moment to sit on the fence.

Many army officers had information of the plot. Outstanding among them were Col. Ṭāhir Yaḥyā, director-general of police, and Col. 'Abd al-Laṭīf al-Darrājī, commander of the Officers College. Other senior officers were Brig. Shākir Maḥmūd Shukrī, Assistant Chief-of-Staff; Col. Rif'at al-Ḥājī Sirrī, director of military intelligence; Brig. Nāzīm al-Ṭabaqchalī, commander of the Second Division; his subordinate Col. 'Abd al-Waḥḥāb al-Shawwāf, commander of the Fifth Brigade at Mosul; Brig. 'Abd al-'Azīz al-'Uqaylī, commander of the First Division at Diwaniya; his subordinate Col. 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Rāwī, commander of the Fifteenth Brigade at Basra; and Col. Rajab 'Abd al-Majīd, before the revolution a leading Free Officer but long since demoted to a post at the Ministry of Development.

A comparative outsider who had close personal contacts with Rashīd 'Ālī at the time, and probably some knowledge of his plans, was Shaykh Muḥammad Maḥmūd al-Ṣawwāf, a leading Muslim scholar.

⁵ In his evidence 'Abd al-Riḍā mentioned the communist influence in his own Mishkhāb, and the growing disrespect shown of late by the peasants to their betters.

At the UAR embassy contacts were at first maintained through the embassy counsellor, Fu'ād 'Abd al-Mubdī. After 'Abd al-Mubdī's departure from Iraq on November 10 they continued with another embassy official—Muḥammad Kabbūl, a Syrian.

The plan crystallized during the following weeks. At a given date the tribes were to rise. They were to cut telephone and telegraph lines, derail trains, stop mails, block roads—in short, create *fawḍā*, chaos. The necessary arms would be supplied from depots to be assembled by the UAR authorities at Susa in Syria, just across the frontier from Iraq. Weapons were to be handed to the insurgents on the outbreak of the disturbances, but not before—a condition said to have been imposed by Abdel Nasser himself. If necessary, UAR transport planes would then drop further supplies wherever needed inside Iraq. The operations would inevitably first concentrate to the south of Baghdad, in the Middle Euphrates region, which had been the centre of tribal disturbances for generations. Steps had been taken to involve the Arabic-speaking north as well, in an effort to isolate the capital from the surrounding countryside.

At the same time, in Baghdad, demonstrations of women and children would be organized to shout their defiance of the government.

So far, the army officers connected with Rashīd 'Ālī were to remain passive—a salient feature of the conspiracy. Now they would present Qassem with a demand for his immediate resignation, since he had landed the country in an impasse and the restoration of order and responsible government was impossible under his rule. Should Qassem refuse, “all means” were to be applied, definitely to include assassination; his supporters among the officers corps—to be identified by their attitude at this stage—would be eliminated as well. Apparently an internecine war within the army was not expected.

With Qassem out of the way, a proclamation already composed by Rashīd 'Ālī would be issued in the name of a new Military Governor General. A brief document, the proclamation stated that Iraq had fallen into dissension and under rule by the “street.” The rising had taken place to restore calm and faith in the government. An army Revolutionary Council would henceforth perform the functions of the Council of Sovereignty and a Cabinet headed by Rashīd 'Ālī would be formed. The Prime Minister would be entrusted by the Revolutionary Council with the duties of President of the Republic as well as the charge “to facilitate the conduct of affairs.”

The Revolutionary Council was to have fifteen members. Rashīd 'Ālī was to be his own Foreign Minister. Four places in the Cabinet were to go to army officers, and two of the civilian ministers were to be 'Abd al-

Raḥīm al-Rāwī and Fāris Nāṣir al-Ḥasan, a lawyer and an extreme nationalist.

Once established, the new government of Iraq would accede to the UAR, while remaining independent in the economic sphere, as promised to Rashīd 'Ālī by Abdel Nasser.

It seems that a general massacre of communists was envisaged during the takeover.

* * *

The moneys required by the tribes would be distributed by Rashīd 'Ālī and provided by the UAR. Accordingly, Rashīd 'Ālī asked the embassy at Baghdad for ID 25,000. At the beginning of December ID 10,000 were paid into a current account in his name at the Baghdad branch of the Banque Nationale pour le Commerce et l'Industrie, a French enterprise with Middle East headquarters at Beirut. A complicated procedure was employed to cover the source of the money; the participation of Khḍūrī Shū'a, a Jewish draper and banker, as a go-between was to afford Maḥdāwī intense satisfaction at the trial.

The night of December 9–10 was fixed for the outbreak, and 'Abd al-Riḍā Sikkar received ID 4,500. The date was duly communicated to the UAR embassy.

D-day did not dawn. Qassem's CID uncovered the conspiracy in all its ramifications by a masterly piece of anti-subversion work. To start with, Rashīd 'Ālī's relatives had talked too much and raised suspicion. A group of CID agents insinuated themselves into the good graces of 'Abd al-Raḥīm al-Rāwī and Mubdir al-Gaylānī, purporting to be a nationalist underground organization by the name of *Ikhā' al-'Arab*, the Arab Brotherhood. The name was cunningly chosen, since it was bound to evoke the memory of the defunct Ikhā' Party, which had made Rashīd 'Ālī's political fortune in the early 'thirties. The stool-pigeons made a show of boundless eagerness for the cause—they proposed to arrange for Qassem's assassination by military police of his entourage. They extracted from Rashīd 'Ālī's confidants every detail of the plot, neatly recorded on a hidden tape, as well as ID 2,500 in cash.

The meetings took place during the first week of December, the last being held on December 7. That day the trap was sprung, the main conspirators were arrested, and Tāhir Yahyā and Darrājī were detained. The following night the news of the plot, or of a plot whose details were being withheld from the public, was broadcast. The conspiracy vanished into thin air. No tribe stirred; in consequence, no arms were delivered across

the frontier, and no officer made shot-gun representations to Qassem.

The Baghdad branch of the Banque Nationale was closed.

The plot had been bound to fail, for other reasons quite apart from the lack of security precautions. It was incredibly naive to assume that in December 1958 Qassem and the communists could be delivered to their doom by a tribal rising supported only passively by a number of army officers. The truth is that Rashid 'Ālī had tried to repeat as closely as possible the coup which had brought him success and power in the entirely different circumstances of 1934–35 against his rivals of the time, 'Alī Jawdat and Jamīl al-Madfa'i.

* * *

On the night of December 9–10—the night scheduled for the outbreak—Rashid 'Ālī, 'Abd al-Raḥīm al-Rāwī and Mubdir al-Gaylānī already appeared before Maḥdāwī's court in a secret session. They were arraigned for armed conspiracy under section 80 of the Baghdad Penal Code (see above, p. 87) and pleaded not guilty. The prosecution, relying on the evidence of the fake Arab Brotherhood and their tapes, had an easy victory, at least over the two last-named accused. Both of the court-appointed defence counsel were communists. They did not even pretend to put up a case for their clients, "since they were lawyers themselves"—surely a plea without precedent. At 9 a.m. on December 10 the court pronounced verdict and sentence: Rāwī and Mubdir al-Gaylānī were found guilty, and sentenced to death by hanging: the accusations against Rashid 'Ālī were not found proven, but he was to be exiled abroad for five years "in order to put an end to conspiracies and to prevent the exploitation of Arab nationalism in an illegal fashion."

Rashid 'Ālī was not set free after his acquittal, presumably to await deportation. However, the decision of the court was not carried out. On the afternoon of December 15 Rashid 'Ālī reappeared before Maḥdāwī, this time charged with having incited a foreign power to commit acts of aggression against Iraq, under Chapter XII, section 2, of the Baghdad Penal Code⁶. He again pleaded not guilty.

⁶ "Anyone who attempts to persuade a foreign state to commit acts of hostility against the state of Iraq, or to declare war on Iraq, or who attempts to supply that foreign state with means which will aid that state in carrying out the aforementioned measures, by conspiring with that foreign state, or contacting it or any of its representatives, shall be punished with death, whether an act of aggression has been committed as a result of these conspiracies or not..." (section 2 of Chapter XII—Offences against the External Safety of the State).

The reason for the second trial—also secret—is not quite clear. By the standards of Maḥdāwī's court Rashīd 'Ālī might have been convicted the first time. Probably Qassem did not at first care to have so venerated a nationalist as Rashīd 'Ālī pronounced guilty of a conspiracy against him, but then changed his mind, a trifle too late; in particular, he would not wish Rashīd 'Ālī to return abroad to serve as a figurehead for rallying Abdel Nasser's partisans. The price Qassem had to pay for his vacillation—if indeed such it was—added a further burden to the already strained relations with Cairo. A fresh indictment had to be drawn up for the purpose and section 2 presented the only practicable possibility; the law of August 7, 1958, under which Maḥdāwī's court sat, provided for no appeal against its verdicts.

This time the prosecution marshalled an imposing array of inside witnesses. The stars were 'Abd al-Raḥīm al-Rāwī and Muḥḍir al-Gaylānī, who, in the shadow of the gallows⁷, had turned State's evidence in fact, though not of course in law, as they were not arraigned at this trial. The same qualification applies to Sikkar who was apparently spared an appearance in the dock in exchange for his service on the witness stand. Rashīd 'Ālī was miserably abject, while his counsel, 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Ḥmūd, defended him ably, stressing the legal absurdities of the trial. But the weight of evidence was overwhelming. After two days, on December 17, Rashīd 'Ālī was sentenced to death⁸.

* * *

The significance, political as well as historical, of the plot and its juridical settlement is greater than the scant publicity they were given would suggest. Much of the lesson can only be deduced. The order for the tribes to rise was never given. But the lack of response at lower levels to the intrigues of the chiefs proved as clearly as an outright fiasco would have done that one aspect of Arab-Iraqi society had changed for ever. The land-owning shaykhs had lost their power to influence events at Baghdad by creating trouble on a large scale in the provinces. The next move against Qassem and his communist allies would have to come from those sympa-

⁷ Literally so, according to an account in *Akḥbār al-Yawm*, Feb. 7, 1959. Muḥḍir al-Gaylānī and 'Abd al-Raḥīm al-Rāwī were taken to the execution chamber, and when the noose was around their necks were promised their lives if they supplied material against Rashīd 'Ālī. Both broke down. The story is credible.

⁸ The judgments of both trials were signed by Col. 'Abd al-Hādī al-Rāwī, a nationalist and relative of 'Abd al-Raḥīm, among other signatories; he resigned from the court soon afterwards.

thizers of Rashīd 'Ālī who had so far preferred the role of sleeping partners—the senior officers associated with the plot.

The affair showed—not for the first time, but as clearly as never before—Qassem's reluctance to advertise discontent: only three persons, all civilians, had been brought to trial, out of many who were seriously implicated. These three had indeed been sentenced to death, but even then their chances of reprieve looked strong. As for the many officers involved, only two suffered at all. They were Ṭāhir Yaḥyā and Darrājī who were transferred to less sensitive appointments after a very short period of detention. This was after the Aref crisis had already shown how little most of these officers were to be trusted to follow Qassem's policy.

In the result, the communists increased in strength. Their immediate gain lay in eager exploitation of Qassem's call for "vigilance" which ushered in a period when the Popular Resistance Force virtually controlled the public scene in Baghdad and most of the towns. Their strategic gain lay in Qassem's heightened sense of dependence on their support. Yet another key position fell to the communists by the demotion of Col. Ṭāhir Yaḥyā from director-general of police; his post went to Col. Nāẓim Rashīd Ḥilmī. Col. 'Abd al-Bāqī Kāẓim was appointed to the vital position of director of Baghdad police. Ḥilmī and Kāẓim proved to be yet two more fellow-travellers who did nothing to check the communist advance, even when plain duty would have demanded exertion from them.

There are indications that the anti-UAR sentiments fermenting in the Rashīd 'Ālī trials were mainly a by-product of the charge which underlay the second trial. The secrecy of the proceedings suggests that, apart from his reluctance to publicize them in Iraq, Qassem did not wish to provoke ill feeling in the UAR. Both Maḥdāwī and Mājid Amīn tried, although not very hard and not all the time, to lessen the odium attaching to Abdel Nasser. UAR sources kept silent about the trial until the beginning of February 1959, by which time relations between the two countries had openly deteriorated.

Abdel Nasser's support of Rashīd 'Ālī's conspiracy was as blatant an alliance with "reaction" to further an Arab objective as any formed by Abdel Nasser in the course of his career. In this respect it constitutes a negation of his revolutionary principles which far surpasses his later association with Shawwāf and his friends. These, after all, were "free", according to Arab nationalist semantics, whatever their stand on certain social or economic questions may have been. Rashīd 'Ālī, with his tribal retinue, belonged to the world of yesterday, despite the glorious memories of his quarrel with Britain. In both the Rashīd 'Ālī and Shawwāf affairs, however, the nationalists were obliged to lean on "reactionary" support,

since so much of progressive opinion had been captured by the communists. It was a situation peculiar to Iraq.

* * *

The trials of Rashīd 'Ālī proved a milestone in the proceedings of Mahdāwī's court. This was the first time, a fortnight before the trial of Aref, that the court convened to deal with an assault on the new regime, personified by the Sole Leader.

Opposing pan-Arab nationalism in its Nasserite context of 1958 stood Mahdāwī, a man of limited intelligence and unlimited vanity, inflexible in a position for which he had no professional qualifications. He was naively persuaded of the vital service he was doing his kinsman and leader and as naively persuaded of his own majesty as he lorded it over the cowering accused.

When public sessions were resumed, Mahdāwī's court had become Mahdāwī's circus. Its atmosphere has often been described. The president ranted and philosophized, abusing the accused; the hall reverberated with choruses from the galleries; poets declaimed their rhapsodies in honour of the court, the people, freedom, socialism; most singular was the intimate byplay between the president and the public.

Western reports of Mahdāwī's circus freely used the epithets "coarse," "sinister," or "bloodthirsty" to denote the proceedings, and they are deserved. If the deadly purpose of the court is disregarded, it was also funny.

One restraint was still exercised. Not until the Shawwāf revolt did Mahdāwī and Amīn abuse Abdel Nasser in person.

CHAPTER 11 NON-COMMUNIST FORCES AND THE REGIME

KURDISH NATIONALISTS

The revolution was enthusiastically acclaimed by all nationalist Kurds, and the majority of Kurdish tribal leaders was at least well disposed. The revolutionary regime responded on its first day of office with the appointments of Khālīd Naqshbandī to the Sovereignty Council and of Bābā 'Alī to the Cabinet, both of them Kurds with a vague nationalist background. The First Manifesto did not mention the Kurds.

Contacts were effected within a matter of days. A congratulatory delegation called on Qassem on July 17, headed by Ibrāhīm Aḥmad. The delegation asked Qassem to grant the Kurdish area a degree of administrative autonomy; Qassem refused. Chaderchi, solicited for support, told Ibrāhīm Aḥmad that this aspect of "Kurdish rights" should be settled by the Permanent Constitution of the republic, not in the provisional one then under consideration¹. The interview with Qassem must have been considered satisfactory nevertheless, for on the next day Baghdad Radio broadcasted a cable to the UN Secretary-General, signed by the members of the delegation "on behalf of 5,000 Kurdish signatories" and "in the name of Kurdish nationalism in Iraq," declaring "our full solidarity with our Arab brethren in the defence of our nascent republic." The government thereupon showed its goodwill by releasing Shaykh Aḥmad Barzani, Mullā Muṣṭafā's elder brother, and other personalities connected with the Barzani troubles in the 1940s.

The Provisional Constitution of July 27 proclaimed in section 3 that "Arabs and Kurds are partners in this homeland"; the same section confirmed "their national (*qawmiyya*) rights within Iraqi unity (*waḥda*)."² Throughout Qassem's regime these two rubber clauses provided the basis for government claims on Kurdish loyalty and for Kurdish counterclaims to their rights. It must, however, be realized that "for the first time in the constitutional history of Iraq Kurdish nationality [or nationalism—*qawmiyya*] had been mentioned as part of the Iraqi entity²."

¹ Private information.

² Jamīl, p. 61.

The first recorded Kurdish reaction to the Provisional Constitution was one of satisfaction. On the day of its promulgation, Kurdish delegations again called on Qassem to congratulate him on the event. Ibrāhīm Aḥmad was among the callers. Another high-level meeting which took place a fortnight later is reported to have been less successful, perhaps because it concerned tangible requests. On August 19 Ibrāhīm Aḥmad with two other UDPK members asked Aref's agreement, as Acting Minister of the Interior, to the licensing of a party newspaper; Aref refused and advised his callers to make use of *al-Jumhūriyya* (!) which he would order to print all material that they might submit. They also requested official recognition of the Nowruz festival—the Kurdish New Year—under the new Public Holidays Law; Aref refused, saying that the law had already been drafted and that it recognized March 21—Nowruz—as “Arbor Day.” The third request of the UDPK delegates was for the summary grant of Iraqi nationality to the Baghdad Faylis, whom the Kurds claimed as their own; Aref again refused, but promised that naturalization would proceed at the rate of one hundred applications a day; the promise was not kept³.

At the time of the revolution Mullā Muṣṭafā Barzani and a few of his exiled intimates were staying in Czechoslovakia on holiday, according to Mullā Muṣṭafā⁴. They approached Qassem, Rubay'ī and Naqshbandī by letter and cable, which messages were broadcast from Baghdad Radio. They offered fervent support for the new regime and requested permission to return. Qassem's reply, favourable and cordial, was broadcast simultaneously with Barzani's request. Rubay'ī and Naqshbandī followed Qassem's lead⁵. At the same time, on September 3, a special law pardoned the participants of the Barzani insurrection of 1945 and provided for material reparation. Ibrāhīm Aḥmad obtained passports in a personal interview with Aref, for once cooperative, and set out to Czechoslovakia at the head of a delegation to escort the chairman of the UDPK home in state. After an audience with Abdel Nasser in Cairo the little group arrived in Baghdad on October 6. Next day Mullā Muṣṭafā saw Qassem, first with Ibrāhīm Aḥmad, and later alone. He again expressed his gratitude and loyalty in fulsome terms. Qassem promised restitution in land, housing and money for the Barzanis who had suffered under the monarchy.

One exchange in the otherwise harmonious parley boded ill for the future. Qassem made reference to the ancient enmities among the Kurdish

³ Private information. Late in 1959 Qassem issued papers of citizenship to “thousands” of Faylis (*R. Baghdad*, Oct. 5–6 [7], 1959).

⁴ Schmidt, *Journey among Brave Men*, Boston, 1964, p. 113.

⁵ *R. Baghdad*, Sept. 2 [4], 3 [5], 5 [8], 1958.

tribes and expressed hope for the growth of goodwill. According to the official version of the talks, Mullā Muṣṭafā replied noncommittally. According to Ibrāhīm Aḥmad, then present, Mullā Muṣṭafā replied that, with all deference to Qassem, forgiving his Kurdish enemies was a thing he could not do—"they are criminals⁶." There can be no doubt that Aḥmad's version is correct.

Qassem then informed Mullā Muṣṭafā that he invited him to stay next to him in Baghdad—the tenor of the invitation was unmistakable—and put Nuri's old residence at his disposal, together with a personal allowance of ID 500 per month⁷. Mullā Muṣṭafā perforce accepted. Although he was permitted to go north for occasional visits, Baghdad remained his home until the eve of his open breach with the regime. But this lay in the darkness of the future; for the time being Mullā Muṣṭafā seems to have gone out of his way to accommodate Qassem beyond the wishes of his friends of the UDPK.

The personal animosity between Mullā Muṣṭafā and Ibrāhīm Aḥmad dates back, it has been suggested, to their first meeting in Prague⁸. It was in the nature of their respective characters and positions that Mullā Muṣṭafā gave vent to his dislike much more freely than the circumspect lawyer Aḥmad, who moreover always remembered that the tribal chief had gifts of leadership which he himself lacked.

It is certain that Qassem did not offer tangible concessions to Kurdish nationalism. When Mullā Muṣṭafā concluded his homecoming address with the benison "long live our beloved leader 'Abd al-Karīm Qassem," he was extending to Qassem a credit for which he had received very little in guarantee.

The improvement of relations with the UDPK continued for some time. The party had been persuaded to remarkable restraint in its demands on the government, so that there had not as yet been occasion for serious disappointment. Qassem was friendly and in need of allies. Mullā Muṣṭafā was impressed and well subsidized. The Kurdish press flourished in reasonable freedom, aside from the ban on the party organ, which was lifted in April 1959. Most important, Kurdish detribalized society seems to have enjoyed a sense of deliverance which it had never experienced before⁹.

⁶ Private information; also *R. Baghdad*, Oct. 8 [10], 1958.

⁷ Qassem on Sept. 23, 1961 (*INA*, Sept. 26, 1961).

⁸ Thus Schmidt, p. 123.

⁹ Cf. Nerevan, "Notes sur la presse Kurde d'Irak," *Orient*, n^o 10, 2^e trimestre 1959, pp. 139–47; Rondot, "Quelques opinions sur les relations arabo-kurdes dans la République Irakienne," *ibid.*, pp. 51–8.

On March 1, 1959, the Commission for the Pardon of Political Offenders cleared the names of four Kurdish officers who had taken part in Barzani's campaign in 1945 and were hanged in 1947. It was a gracious act, but it bore the familiar stamp: what Qassem regarded as a gesture of goodwill, complete in itself, was seen by those interested as an earnest of future policy.

* * *

The period between November 1958 and March 1959 saw the consolidation of the alliance between the UDPK and the ICP.

Since its beginnings the UDPK had strong ties with the communists. The detribalized town intelligentsia which constituted the *part* were psychologically predisposed in favour of the Marxist-Leninist brand of "anti-imperialism." On the other hand, their national consciousness in a world where they were surrounded by enemies generally prevented them from merging in the communist movement proper.

After Qassem's downfall Ibrāhīm Aḥmad argued that the UDPK's self-identification as a Marxist-Leninist movement over the years had been wholly insincere. "It was the phraseology demanded by the entire intellectual youth of Iraqi Kurdistan; had we not adopted it, we would have lost them to the communists." He added, "It was a piece of opportunism, and a mistake¹⁰." This contention receives indirect support from evidence that the ICP did not view the UDPK assumption of Marxist terminology as a flattering imitation, but as an unauthorized liberty.

While the two parties remained in reasonably good standing with the regime, the working formula which evolved between them can be summed up as follows: the UDPK accepted the communist lead on issues not directly concerning Kurdish matters, provided that this attitude did not embroil it with Qassem. The ICP, on the other hand, tacitly recognized the UDPK claim to speak for Kurdish interests, and paid generous tribute to the inalienable right of the Kurds in Iraq to develop their national attributes in equal "partnership" with the Arabs—short of self-determination with its implied right of secession and independence. This last point was not disavowed, but must wait until the final defeat of "imperialism" in the area¹¹. When relations between Qassem and the ICP first, and the UDPK afterwards, had become hopelessly embittered, new attitudes had to be evolved.

¹⁰ Private information.

¹¹ The attitude of Soviet theoreticians to the Kurdish problem up to the spring of 1959 is analysed in *Mizan*, No. 5, May 1959, pp. 1–6. See also Ghassemlou, *Kurdistan and the Kurds*, Prague, 1965, pp. 249–56.

The existence of a Kurdish branch in the ICP was not, apparently, a disturbing factor. It was the UDPK contention—probably a correct one—that the Kurdish branch existed only on paper. If the ICP had many individual Kurdish members that was a different matter. In its contacts with the ICP the UDPK preferred to deal with Arabs.

After a period of negotiation the special relationship between the ICP and the UDPK was consolidated in a Covenant of Cooperation, signed on November 10, 1958. The agreement was negotiated, and ultimately signed, by Ibrāhīm Aḥmad on behalf of the UDPK and by Bāhā al-Dīn Nūrī on behalf of the ICP. However, their proposals were closely supervised and met with criticism from the central committees of both parties; Mullā Muṣṭafā seems to have had the last word on the Kurdish side.

The first draft, initialled by the chief negotiators, incorporated the following conditions:

- 1) Spies and agents of imperialism were to be expelled from government service.
- 2) Imperialist treaties were to be abrogated. Utmost cooperation with the UAR against imperialism was to be encouraged, and diplomatic, economic and cultural relations with the Soviet Union, the communist countries and the neutrals strengthened.
- 3) Popular Resistance Forces were to be developed as far as possible.
- 4) Alliances to advance Arab liberation were to be concluded.
- 5) Iraq was to leave the Sterling area; stringent control was to be exerted over the oil and other foreign companies, and over foreign banks. Agrarian and labour reforms were essential.
- 6) The Permanent Constitution was to be based on elections by secret ballot.
- 7) The right of the Kurds to self-determination was to be recognized. Iraq belonged to both Kurds and Arabs and this community had to be acknowledged.
- 8) Iraqi Kurdistan was to be organized as a province administered by Kurds, with equality of rights for the minorities (Turcomans, Assyrians).
- 9) Both sides reserved their freedom of action as regards the propagation of their ideologies and the development of their organizations, as well as the right to voice mutual criticism in a fraternal spirit. If differences of opinion were to occur, the sides would exercise tolerance.

- 10) Both sides, as well as others cooperating with them, would be guided in their common activities and aims by a Supreme Council. In addition, committees on which minorities (such as the Turcomans) might be represented were to be elected for the realization of common objectives.

It will be seen that the negotiators had adopted a principle of mutual concession *in toto*. It was too much for the ICP central committee, which refused to ratify the draft and insisted that the sentence concerning "self-determination" be struck off article 7, and the phrase "organized as a province" eliminated from article 8. The UDPK gave way, it is said, on the insistence of Mullā Muṣṭafā and over the protests of Ibrāhīm Aḥmad, and the amended draft was signed by the original negotiators. The UDPK alignment was completed with the formal accession of the UDPK to the United National Front.

The cooperation of the UDPK with the ICP must also be viewed in the light of the Arab nationalist attitude towards Kurdish nationalism. The attitude was defined at the time under review by the Lebanese Ba'ṯh organ¹²: "The generous Arab nation has taken all these minorities under its protection. . . to leave them the choice of either remaining within the Arab homeland or else of emigrating into their own countries, like the Armenians. . . Arab nationalism supports the struggle of the Kurds for a Kurdish state. What are the frontiers of that state? The framework which contains Kurdish nationalism is Kurdistan as included by Turkey and Iran. Arab nationalism. . . will be happy to have as its friendly neighbour a liberated and democratic Kurdistan. But it is not prepared to cede of its own country to others. . ."

In short, the support consisted of an invitation to the Iraqi Kurds to leave for Iran or Turkey.

It was inevitable that the return of the Barzani leaders and the reactivation of the UDPK should not pass without dissonance. Those tribes traditionally jealous of the overweening Barzanis were now justifiably afraid of the effect which the restitution of Barzani lands would have on their own subsistence, already pitifully meagre, on the slopes and in the valleys of their harsh country. The Agrarian Reform Law, although of less fundamental significance in the Kurdish north, was an additional irritant to the aghas, ever suspicious of all that emanated from Baghdad.

¹² *Ṣaḥāfa*, Beirut, Feb. 4, 1959.

It is not surprising, therefore, that in the hectic weeks of November and December 1958 the comparative quiet which had marked Kurdish affairs after the revolution was broken by rumours of "risings" against the regime, said to be followed by mass migrations, or flights, into Turkish and Iranian territory. In fact, little seems to have happened beyond the periodic disturbances characteristic of the area, and the rumours subsided for the time being.

At about the same time contacts were established between the UDKP and Assyrian circles of the Left to discuss mutual political support, but they came to nothing¹³.

The government reacted to the rumblings in the Kurdish areas with appeals to the goodwill of "our Kurdish brethren." In an address on November 25, Qassem referred cryptically to "our brothers of the north, the Kurds, who came and brought with them maps which imperialism had distributed to them, and they also brought sums of money distributed for the sake of disrupting the people and the homeland¹⁴." Reports that Mullā Muṣṭafā was under arrest, or house arrest at the least, were officially denied.

THE CONSTITUTIONALISTS

The nationalists had execrated the old regime for its shortcomings on Arab-nationalist, social and constitutional grounds—in this order. There was also current in Iraq an opinion held by some of the most articulate and best-educated sectors of the public which based its criticism on the same factors, but in inverse order. This line of thinking will be referred to as "constitutionalist." It was most clearly expressed at an organizational level by the National Democratic Party, together with its later offshoot, the National Progressive Party.

Kāmil Chaderchi, the aging chairman of the NDP, and overwhelmingly the personality of greatest consequence in the party, did not welcome the new regime without qualms. It was, after all, military, and Chaderchi had had his fill of cooperation with military rulers in 1936–37 when he was minister during Bakr Ṣidqī's dictatorship. According to reports it was only after a lively debate, in conclave with his nearest party colleagues, that he agreed, on July 14, to extend to Qassem so much credit as to allow Ḥadīd and Ḥmūd to take up their Cabinet posts.

¹³ *Jarīda*, Dec. 14, 1958.

¹⁴ *R. Baghdad*, Nov. 26 [27], 1958. The "maps" possibly refer to the autonomous Kurdistan of the covenant's first draft. As for the "moneys," bribes were traditionally handed about among the tribes by many interested parties.

Otherwise the party as yet had much to be satisfied with, and little cause for alarm. Qassem bore little resemblance to Baqr Ṣidqī. He was courteous and diffident; his devotion to social progress could not be reasonably doubted; his promises of devolution to constitutional government, while vague, seemed sincere. The military element in the Cabinet was not numerically strong; civil servants or "technicians" were as few in number; the majority of ministers were politicians or independents who had detested the old regime. The two NDP ministers held the very important departments of Finance and Agriculture, and their position was further enhanced when they received on September 30 the portfolios of Development and Education in acting capacities.

The legislative and administrative record of the new regime was promising, and all that could have been expected from a reformist-progressive point of view. It is not therefore surprising that the foremost ideologist of the NDP after Chaderchi, its secretary Ḥusayn Jamīl, then Iraqi Ambassador at New Delhi, towards the end of 1958 praised the regime in glowing terms. It aimed, he said, at "the implementation of democracy as a way of living, . . . democracy in its new political, social and economic sense. . . , a human living standard for the people, social and economic security." The author maintained that a real "revolution" (*thawra*) had taken place, and not a mere "military *putsch* (*inqilāb 'askarī*). He also quoted the Lebanese publicist Clovis Maksoud in differentiating between Egypt and Iraq: in Egypt the political parties had opposed the revolution, while in Iraq they had promoted it—the inference was clear¹⁵.

It remained for Chaderchi to introduce a somewhat less enthusiastic note on the same foundation. His recorded opinion of Qassem was at that time friendly, if tending to the nondescript—"a sincere man, whose outlook is democratic." The NDP stood for "the restoration of political parties," but he felt that "time is not ripe to press the government" on that point and he preferred "to wait for some time"¹⁶.

Chaderchi had set views on the form Arab unity should take. He favoured an Arab federation with wide autonomy for the member states. A closer examination of his concept indicates that he was attempting to unite incompatibles, since he stressed the supremacy of the central body and of the regional governments in turn and left unclear where the residuary power lay. One point, however, was unambiguous: "We shall elect Abdel Nasser as president of the federation, on condition that this will not inter-

¹⁵ Jamīl, pp. 47–66.

¹⁶ *The Times*, Sept. 3, 1958.

fere with our internal affairs. We are interested in full internal democracy and we reject any notion of one-party rule¹⁷."

On September 3, 1958, Chaderchi went to Cairo on a two-week visit. He was received by Abdel Nasser whom he tried to interest in his federal project. With the recent dissolution of political parties in Syria in view, Chaderchi stressed that the Iraqi component of the future federation would keep political parties alive. He received a flat rebuff to his proposals¹⁸. Qassem's attitude to Chaderchi's mission is not known. Possibly he guessed at the outcome and welcomed it for the lesson it would serve to all genuine federalists who were not utilizing the conception mainly as a counter to Nasserite "Unity."

THE ISLAMIC LEADERS

As communist power grew in Iraq, official Islam registered growing disquietude and resentment, although the higher authorities on both sides still found it inopportune to declare an open war of ideologies. Since World War II Middle East communist parties avoided attacking religion as such, and the Muslim leaders were too cautious, or too timid, to brand a movement which was both ruthlessly aggressive and in league with the regime.

Naturally the masses of their followers knew no such calculating restraint. At the popular level a chaotic situation was developing. Clashes between militant unbelievers and believers seem to have taken place almost daily; several scores of victims were reported. The centres of violence were Mosul, the Baghdad suburb of Kadhimain, Karbala and above all Najaf.

From December 1958 and throughout January and February 1959, exhortations to believers appeared in the non-communist press usually signed by "a group of religious leaders from Najaf"; in one case at least the signatories were the two most notable Shi'i *mujtahidūn*, Āyātallah al-Zanjānī and Muḥsin al-Ḥakīm. Apparently seven such statements were issued during these three months. Their main contention was that with the removal of imperialism there was no social or economic evil with which Islam was not fully competent to cope; "we can accept no other religion or doctrine or party." Communism was not mentioned by name¹⁹. Other anti-communist sources of the time, including those in the UAR,

¹⁷ *Jarīda*, Sept. 3, 1958.

¹⁸ Haykal, in *Ahrām*, Jan. 31, 1959.

¹⁹ *Mid. Mir.*, Jan. 18, 1959; *Falaṣṭīn*, Jan. 30. Feb. 13, 1959; *ANA*, Feb. 12 [14], 1959; *Yaqza*, Feb. 24—*Mid. Mir.*, March 1, 1959.

provided gruesome details of the red onslaught on religion, ranging from the alleged murder of Āyātallah al-Zanjānī himself to the desecration of mosques. It was said that the notoriously atheist pamphlet *Allah fī qafaṣ al-ittihām* ("God in the Dock") by Dr. Muṣṭafā Maḥmūd was being widely circulated. The reports were all denied in Iraq, and were undoubtedly much exaggerated; the murder of Zanjānī, for instance, proved a fabrication. On the other hand, there was a basis of truth to the rumoured attacks; fervent communists of the lower ranks undoubtedly perpetrated and organized anti-religious acts of vandalism and profanity.

Delegations of Muslim dignitaries—Sunni as well as Shi'i—called on Qassem and expressed their alarm at the advance of communism. Qassem had no wish to become embroiled on yet another front for no pertinent reason. He did his best to quieten his callers by studied courtesy—he later called on Ḥakīm in hospital—and by protesting his devotion to Islam. He further propitiated them by directing 'Abdī to ban the import of a number of Marxist books, together with pan-Arab propaganda, literature suspected of Zionism and what 'Abdī considered lewd publications²⁰. It may be surmised that Qassem exerted pressure on the communist leaders to restrain the atheist ardour of their followers.

The leaders, at any rate, acted with caution. They mobilized "progressive" *'ulamā'* to stress the compatibility, indeed the kinship, of Islam with socialism. The communist and para-communist press attacked "hostility to the republic under the cloak of religion," but never religion itself. Articles signed by communist leaders noted with pain instances when holy places had been misused for purposes alien to their noble objects and reiterated the authors' respect for religious dignitaries who were true to their vocation.

The Shawwāf mutiny had the effect of concentrating communist attention on their main enemies, while its failure cowed the Muslim leaders into temporary acquiescence.

THE BA'TH AND THE NATIONALIST SECRET SOCIETIES

The Iraqi Ba'th Party receded into the background during this period, and it is easy to realise why. Its chances had depended from the outset on the possibility of rousing the street and the students in an organized effort for *wahda*, but Qassem's cooperation with the communists out-matched the resourcefulness of the Ba'th leaders in achieving headway with these two instruments. On the other hand, the political situation had not

²⁰ *WI*, No. 96, Dec. 16, 1958, p. 3.

so far clarified as to propel or force the party leadership into total submersion, with Qassem's assassination providing "the only solution" for achieving its aims²¹. The party had failed to secure the positions of power which might make an attempt at a *coup d'état* on a more widely organized basis feasible rather than suicidal from the start, and this line of action was left to the army commanders in opposition to Qassem. In the meantime, the local cells of the Ba'th remained the chief opponents of the communists in the Baghdad street brawls.

Towards the end of December 1958 the party issued a statement which could no longer be published in Iraq because of the communist-controlled censorship²². Accusing the communists of "undermining the revolution through intrigue, conspiracies and terror, and dividing the people by attacking the national trend and parties and organizations which believe in unity and liberation," the statement alleged that the slogan of "federation" propagated by them was misleading, and that the communists "defamed the leadership of Abdel Nasser." They were "endeavouring to influence the authorities into taking action against the Arab Socialist Ba'th Party and all loyal pro-union elements. . ." The Ba'th Party merely wanted "a popular progressive rule in Iraq which will earnestly work to achieve unity. . ." The only mention of Qassem was a phrase charging the communists with trying to embroil him with Abdel Nasser.

In its lack of aggressiveness the statement demonstrates to what extent the drive had gone out of the movement for the time being. In these circumstances the Ba'th's inclusion in the United National Front, while it lasted, could be nothing but a sham maintained for communist convenience.

The position of the Ba'th at the beginning of 1959 was well described by the director of Baghdad Radio. Salīm al-Fakhri said in a newspaper interview²³: "They walk about free. But the government knows every one of them, and the security forces can arrest them in a wink. But this isn't our policy." As for *al-Jumhūriyya*, Fakhri maintained with no ordinary cynicism that its Ba'thi publishers had a licence for it, yet "for some reason or other they don't publish it"; the reason, as all in Iraq knew, was that they were under arrest or in exile.

The resignation of Rikābī, the Ba'th minister in the Cabinet, at the beginning of February 1959 (see below, p. 152), after months of merely nom-

²¹ *Al-Hall al-awḥad*, "The Only Solution," is the title of Rikābī's published account of the attempted assassination of Qassem.

²² *Ṣaḥāfa*—*ANA*, Dec. 27 [29], 1958.

²³ *Ayyām*, Khartoum, Jan. 9, 1959.

inal membership, must have decisively assisted Ba'th leaders in defining their position towards the regime. Significantly still in February the Ba'th regional command resolved "unanimously" to design Qassem's assassination. However, within a few days the regional command decided that the chances were too slight for success²⁴.

* * *

The Ba'th had been conceived as a party in the modern Western sense, although developments in the country effectually forced it underground. In contradistinction, since the early autumn of 1958, when "the situation started to deteriorate," secret societies began to form. Their positive credo was their devotion to Arab nationalism, still interpreted as full acceptance of Abdel Nasser's leadership of a unified Arab nation. On the negative side the societies nourished a frenzied hatred of Qassem and the communists, with the order of preference shifting periodically. It was a hatred that can be rationalized with the disappointed hopes of Arab political unity, but also must have had its seat in frustrated ambition dimly conscious of its impotence.

The activities of the societies mainly found expression in conclave behind locked doors where the sins of the regime were castigated and bloody accounts settled verbally in expectation of the day of revenge. Leaflets were furtively deposited in street corners and stairways in localities where sympathy was most likely to be forthcoming and retribution least, such as the A'zamiyya and Karkh quarters of Baghdad, and towns along the Upper Euphrates. Attempts to enlist Shi'i divines on the common ground of anti-communism met with little enthusiasm and less success. It may be inferred from what is known of the Rashīd 'Ālī and Shawwāf affairs that the UAR Embassy at Baghdad was fully informed of the existence of the societies and helpful at least with advice. The authorities were watchful, and occasionally made a worthwhile catch. Communist and pro-communist publications generally thought it wiser to ignore the societies than give them the publicity of abuse. An approving or even informative reference to them in the press was obviously impossible.

The fact that the societies assumed separate identities seems to have been largely incidental. On the authority of Fāris Nāṣir al-Ḥasan, a leading member of the Nationalist League, it is clear that "the Ba'th Party, the Nationalist League [*al-Rābiṭa al-Qawmiyya*], the Arab Nationalists, the Arab Gathering, the Istiqlāl Party and the Arab Brotherhood [*Ikhā'*

²⁴ Rikābī, pp. 28-9.

al-'Arab, a CID decoy—see above, p. 131] all had the same aims”; it was “their clandestine activity and the present situation” which had given rise to their appellations “which stand in reality for one front²⁵.” A contributory factor to the exigency of “the present situation” was most probably that the would-be politicians were congenitally unsuited to cooperate.

One of the clandestine societies deserves exploration. This was the Arab Nationalists Movement—*Ḥarakat al-Qawmiyyīn al-'Arab*²⁶. To avoid confusion with the generic term “Arab Nationalists” the movement will be referred to in this work as the Harakiyeen, as its members were commonly called in Iraq after Qassem’s downfall. It had its origin at a students’ club founded at the American University of Beirut in the wake of the Palestine war, *Al-'Urwa al-Wuthqā* (“The Firm Tie”). *Al-'Urwa al-Wuthqā* had since 1949 seen its mission as revenge on Zionism. The *Ḥarakat al-Qawmiyyīn al-'Arab* after about 1956 became the champion of Abdel Nasser without reservation. The Harakiyeen network spread from Lebanon into Syria, where its headquarters remained during UAR rule, and into Jordan, Iraq and Libya, and it was especially strong in Kuwait with its large Palestinian community. The society always remained conspiratorial. This characteristic accorded both with its basic policy which, often blatantly, aimed at the subversion of the regime of the host country and, as the months after Qassem’s downfall were to show, with the ingrained preference of its leaders. Unlike the Ba’th the Harakiyeen did not try to develop a mass movement. Also unlike the Ba’th, it spent little effort in developing an ideology. The Harakiyeen did not pretend, prior to 1963, to be socialist or recognize any deviation from total acceptance of Abdel Nasser’s Arab leadership.

The Harakiyeen imitated the organization of the Ba’th, having a “national command” in Damascus and, after 1961, in Beirut, with regional commands and local cells. The secretary-general of the national command was Dr. George Ḥabash, a Palestinian and one of the founders of *al-'Urwa al-Wuthqā*.

In Iraq the Harakiyeen played a minor role in the nationalist underground until about 1960.

* * *

Even before the end of 1958 the nationalist underground had formed a superstructure, the so-called Nationalist Front, *al-Jabha al-Qawmiyya*.

²⁵ *Protocols*, V, p. 51. Ḥasan became a minister in the Cabinet of Bazzāz, in September 1965.

²⁶ See also Suleiman, *Political Parties in Lebanon*, New York, 1967, pp. 155 et seq.

This edifice never had much substance, much less than the United National Front during the last years of Nuri. It seems to have been no more than an acknowledgment that the underground nationalist bodies were battling against the same enemies and for the reversion of Iraq to the mainstream of Arab "liberated" opinion. Contacts were established, but there were no common institutions, or coordinated action or planning. After the summer of 1961 even this weak link disintegrated.

THE ARMY

Nobody in Iraq was better qualified than Qassem to appreciate the part which the army was capable of playing in the making and unmaking of government. Throughout his rule he did his utmost to feed its morale, insofar as his nature and fundamental concept of his mission permitted. The need to propitiate the army was never more apparent than during the period from November 1958 to March 1959. The nationalists were smarting from acute disappointment after the downfall of Aref and the failure of Rashīd 'Alī's plot, in conjunction with the clearly mounting hostility of the government; however, they were not as yet decisively beaten and obviously on the threshold of armed revolt. The communist advance also threatened to sweep beyond conformity to Qassem's interests. Only the army could act as a counterweight to either nationalists or communists.

The point was promptly taken on the day of Aref's return from Europe. On November 4, a Cabinet decision was broadcast raising the pay of private soldiers and noncommissioned officers by 10 to 15 per cent. Of greater political significance were the new officers service and army pension laws, which came into force on January 1, 1959. The Army Officers Service Law raised the pay and the emoluments of the officers by between 50 and 90 per cent, although the royal army had been very well paid in comparison with the Civil Service²⁷. The Army Pensions Law, patently designed to appease officers who found themselves unexpectedly out of the service, established generous pension scales independent of any income which the officer might earn after his retirement. Yet another benefit was the projected building of two officers' quarters of 2,500 well-appointed houses on the outskirts of Baghdad, although the accommodation of army officers had not so far constituted the most serious of the nation's housing problems.

The goodwill of the professional soldiers was purchased by other means apart from improvement of their material terms of service. Army Day,

²⁷ A comparison of basic monthly salaries is interesting (see overleaf).

to commemorate the founding of the Iraqi army in 1921, was celebrated for the first time on January 6, 1959, and was declared an official holiday²⁸. The army chiefs, given publicity on radio and television programmes, extolled the importance of the role of the army in the new society and its growing strength since the revolution. It was then officially revealed that "the Iraqi army. . . had equipped itself with the most modern and effective weapons. . . the weapons of friends without conditions or strings." Un-

Footnote 27 (continued)

	Law of 1955 ID	Law of 1959 ID	Rise in %
Field Marshal	120	210	75
General	105	180	71
Lt.-General	90	155	72
Major-General	75	135	80
Brigadier	60	115	92
Colonel	50	95	90
Lt.-Colonel	40	75	88
Major	35	60	71
Captain	30	50	67
Lieutenant	25	40	60
2nd Lieutenant	20	30	50
Army Imam Special Grade	25	40	60
Army Imam First Grade	21	35	67
Army Imam Second Grade	18	30	67
Army Imam Third Grade	15	25	67
Army Imam Fourth Grade	12	20	67

It is worth noting that the largest proportional increases went to the ranks of Brigadier, Colonel and Lt.-Colonel—the most "delicate" positions politically as the recent revolution had shown.

The terms of service enjoyed by army officers are strikingly illustrated by a comparison with the salaries in the Civil Service. Towards the end of the Qassem period a provincial governor (*mutaṣarrif*) received on the average ID 100 a month, a district commissioner (*qā'imaqām qaḍā'*) ID 60, a subdistrict director (*mudīr nāḥiya*) ID 35. Iraq had at that time fourteen provinces, sixty-six districts and 174 subdistricts.

²⁸ January 6, 1921, when the nucleus of the Iraqi army was formed, antedated the coming of Fayṣal by half a year; it was therefore *not* a Hashimite occasion.

officially it had been known for many weeks that an arms contract had been concluded with the Soviet Union soon after the establishment of diplomatic relations, and that consignments had been arriving in Basra since November. The pace of supply must have been rapid, for all photographs of the Iraqi army published after the spring of 1959 show a great variety of Soviet equipment. The former British equipment was not discarded, but evidently became of secondary importance as replacements arrived.

Also announced on this occasion was the formation of the Fifth Division, the fourth infantry division of the army. Brig. 'Alī Ghālib 'Azīz, a devoted friend of Qassem, was appointed its commander. The division remained stationed in Baghdad. Two months later Qassem announced that a Sixth Division would soon be formed. Qassem's one-sentence remark within a speech lasting an hour was given banner headlines in the Iraqi press, and the reportage showed clearly how receptive to this kind of glory the public was considered.

Apart from their value as morale raisers these facts were of little significance. The Iraqi-Soviet arms deal never had an appreciable influence on the balance of power in the Middle East, militarily or politically. The Fifth Division was composed of the former Royal Guards Brigade and several hitherto nondivisional units, and apparently never attained full strength. The Sixth Division was not brought to birth under Qassem.

Army Day was also the occasion for announcing wholesale promotions in the officer corps, not least being that of Qassem himself who became Major-General, and the only nontechnical serving officer to hold this rank.

The army reserve had its share of attention. On March 2, 1959, at the passing-out parade terminating a course for army reserve officers, the first since the revolution, Qassem congratulated all the 883 cadets on graduating, announcing that individual failures had been overlooked. His lengthy address, occupying ten pages of print, contained the aphorism that one hour's work was better than a thousand of speech-making²⁹.

THE CABINET CRISIS OF FEBRUARY 1959

The first changes introduced into the revolutionary Cabinet on September 30, 1958, had a significance easily grasped since they followed in the wake of Aref's demotion. The second change was more complex, although fundamentally it could be connected with the communist advance.

²⁹ R. *Baghdad*, March 2 [4], 1959.

On the evening of February 7, 1959, Baghdad Radio broadcasted the resignations of the following ministers:

Dr. 'Abd al-Jabbār al-Jūmur (Minister of Foreign Affairs);
Brig. Nājī Tālib (Minister of Social Affairs);
Shaykh Bābā 'Alī (Minister of Communications and Public Works);
Dr. Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Maḥmūd (Minister of Health);
Ṣiddīq Shanshal (Minister of Guidance);
Fu'ād al-Rikābī (Minister without Portfolio).

The new appointments were:

Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hāshim Jawād;
Minister of Education, Brig. Muḥī al-Dīn 'Abd al-Ḥamīd;
Minister of Social Affairs, Brig. 'Abd al-Wahhāb Amīn;
Minister of Communications and Public Works, Ḥasan al-Tālabānī;
Minister of Development, Ṭal'at al-Shaybānī;
Minister of Health, Maj.-Gen. Dr. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Malik al-Shawwāf;
Minister of Guidance, Ḥusayn Jamīl;
Minister without Portfolio, rtd. Brig. Fu'ād 'Ārif.

The reshuffle had an immediate sequel in the retirement, for all practical purposes, of Muḥammad Maḥdī Kubba from the Sovereignty Council. His signature appeared for the last time in the Official Gazette under the announcement of the Cabinet changes. His formal membership did not lapse until December 1961, after the death of Naqshbandī.

In essence, the resignations can be described as the walkout of those ministers who would no longer associate themselves with Qassem's evident acquiescence in the tightening communist grip of public affairs. The foreign Arab press, not uniformly under UAR influence, reported that entreaties and angry remonstrations with Qassem had preceded the final secession. Some sources stated that the resignations had been proffered earlier but had been withdrawn at Qassem's earnest request and promises of speedy improvements. The excitement over Aref's death sentence, pronounced on February 5, seems to have precipitated the final step.

The reorganized Cabinet was more pronouncedly Left than its predecessor, with a stronger admixture of "Qassem's Friends." The nationalists and their wellwishers were gone.

Of the newcomers, Ḥusayn Jamīl reinforced the NDP group in the Cabinet—already strong qualitatively, if not in number: neither Qassem nor Jamīl himself had the imagination to sense that the choice of Chaderchi's closest disciple was bound to prove unhappy. Tālabānī, an urbanized

Kurd, was another NDP member, no longer active in the party, but definitely "progressive". Dr. Shaybānī, an engineer, a one-time Istiqlāl and later NDP member, was by now believed to have drifted even further left. The four officers who joined the Cabinet had all been conspicuous at Aref's trial for their unfriendliness to the accused. Shawwāf and 'Abd al-Ḥamīd were believed to harbour leftist sympathies. Fu'ād 'Ārif was a Kurd and sympathetic to the UDPK. Amīn, whom Qassem had undoubtedly chosen for his enmity to Aref, later displayed sympathy with conservative Islamic circles but as yet was believed to be safely unpolitical. Hāshim Jawād, a career diplomat with a record of active opposition to the Baghdad Pact and since the revolution the Iraqi representative at the United Nations, was close to the NDP.

The general impression that the reshuffle signified a further leap forward for the communists was naturally strengthened by the satisfaction expressed in the now licensed ICP daily *Ittiḥād al-Sha'b*.

* * *

Ḥusayn Jamīl's career as Minister of Guidance was of brief duration. On the day after his appointment, on February 8, he demonstrated his independence by expressing the hope that the Iraqi press would act positively to clear the Arab political atmosphere³⁰. On the following day he stated his disavowal of "any conflict of interests" between Iraq and the UAR, and made a plea for a special effort to further goodwill between the two countries³¹.

The minister had immediate occasion to prove that he meant what he said. The February 9 issue of *Ittiḥād al-Sha'b* welcomed the changes in the Cabinet as removing from it "a group in which reactionaries and intriguers had high hopes." Jamīl saw the comment as a challenge to his authority, and banned the newspaper for a fortnight. Next morning, however, it appeared as usual; the publishers had appealed to Qassem who had instantly overruled his minister. Qassem explained that on principle he did not wish to curb freedom of expression; also, under Martial Law Ordinance No. 18, the banning of newspapers was the prerogative of the Military Governor General³². On February 14, after an acrimonious discussion with Qassem and two days of self-imposed house arrest, Jamīl returned to New Delhi. On the morrow it was announced that Fu'ād 'Ārif,

³⁰ *Mid. Mir.*, Feb. 15, 1959.

³¹ *MENA*, Feb. 9 [11], 1959.

³² *Ahrām*, Feb. 12, 1959; *R. Baghdad*, Feb. 28 [March 1], 1959.

the Minister of State, had been appointed "Acting Minister of Guidance." The appointment remained effective until the next Cabinet reshuffle, five months later.

It is not difficult to understand why Qassem believed that he should not alienate the ICP at this stage to placate his nationalist enemies and encourage the illusions of a constitutionalist lawyer; but in the process he turned a convinced supporter of stature into an equally convinced opponent.

The *amour propre* of later Ministers of Guidance was rescued by a formula by which the Military Governor General supervised the press "as advised by the Minister of Guidance."

The revolutionary Cabinet had nearly suffered a much heavier blow. Ḥadīd and Ḥmūd, the NDP Ministers of Finance and Agriculture respectively, both convinced anti-communists, also tendered their resignations on February 7, but withdrew them at Qassem's urgent request. Then, on February 12, they resigned once more, explaining that they could not, or would not, serve in a Cabinet in which the NDP was the sole political party to be represented. The step was made under pressure from Chaderchi. Jamīl's sad experience during the past few days had hardened Chaderchi's antipathy to the regime and made the positions of Ḥadīd and Ḥmūd more difficult. However, they once more yielded to Qassem's pleadings not to desert him in the hour of crisis. Chaderchi was deeply chagrined and told the two ministers that after his return from his forthcoming journey abroad he would retire from party activity³³.

SECURITY MEASURES

In the second half of November 1958 the Iraqi government requested foreign states to close down all consulates outside Baghdad. An exception was the Iranian Consulate at Karbala, necessary for regulating the affairs of Iranian pilgrims whose visits to the holy city constituted a major source of income for the population. This decision was evidently due to Qassem's persistent fear of foreign intrigue, which, although nebulous, was bound to heighten at a time of growing tension. Since, however, the countries affected were either Western states or currently hostile to the Iraqi communists—Great Britain, the United States, Turkey, the United Arab Republic—this would certainly intensify the impression inside the country and abroad that the Iron Curtain was descending between Iraq and the outer world. Foreigners were also required to obtain permission from the security authorities to make journeys outside Baghdad.

³³ *Ahālī*, April 28, 1960; *Bayān*, April 29, 1960.

The Baghdad Penal Code Amendment Law of January 10, 1959, replaced Chapter XII of the original code dealing with "Offences against the External Safety of the State"; it included the redefinition of a number of offences against internal security. The impressive list of crimes for which the death penalty was available—although not mandatory—encompassed high treason and espionage; sabotage of military bases, means of transportation, or oil installations; collusion by an Iraqi national with an enemy of Iraq or another Arab country; attempts to change the republican government, as established under the Provisional Constitution, by force, together with the planning and abetting of such attempts; and "plotting" that led to the use of armed force by the state. The Amendment Law also abolished section 89a of the Baghdad Penal Code which imposed heavy penalties for "subversive propaganda."

The communists were highly satisfied, but the cause for rejoicing was proved premature. Section 31 of the Amendment Law, later to serve the government against the communists, fixed a maximum penalty of ten years' hard labour for "disseminating, by any means, news aimed at weakening the government, disturbing general security, vilifying the armed forces or strengthening foreign influence."

No doubt the existing legislation would have sufficed to cover all conceivable security breaches, but the amendments registered the deterioration of the political climate since the summer of 1958.

CHAPTER 12 FROM AREF'S ARREST TO SHAWWĀF'S REVOLT—RELATIONS WITH THE UAR

The relations between Qassem and Abdel Nasser deteriorated between November 1958 and March 1959 beyond the point of no return, although rock bottom was reached only after the Shawwāf revolt and much later they reverted to a show of sullen coexistence. The process was inextricably bound up with the relations of both sides to the communists.

The decline that set in very shortly after the Iraqi revolution was incident to the basic positions of the two principals. Qassem, determined to keep Iraq independent, was faced with Abdel Nasser's conception of *qawmiyya* as the spirit sweeping the Arab world, with the UAR as its incarnation and himself its guide. As there could be no place for a rival ideology, or rival leader, when one arose, conflict would certainly ensue.

The reality of UAR-Iraqi relations, hitherto kept from the public eye, was now exposed. Aref's arrest and the inevitable involvement of Cairo contributed to the deterioration. More directly, it was the result of the struggle between Abdel Nasser and the Syrian communists, drawing the Iraqi communists into its vortex. But whatever the attendant circumstances, the conflict was bound to come to a head.

* * *

Qassem's basic position, which always remained fundamentally unchanged, was nevertheless restated in the terms of the hour. An address delivered towards the end of November 1958 placed unprecedented emphasis on Qassem's determination to preserve the entity of Iraq¹.

"Our Provisional Constitution was drawn up after deep thought. . . We arranged the sections according to their importance; the first section states that Iraq is an independent republic with full sovereignty." He called for cooperation between the states, but as separate units: "We cooperate with our brotherly Arab states. . . on the basis of the individual interests of those Arab states." Iraq would march with "all Arab states, whether

¹ R. Baghdad, Nov. 26 [27], 1958.

Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Libya, Sudan, the UAR—which includes Syria and Egypt, Jordan . . . but she will march calmly and wisely.” The speech did not contain a single reference to the possibility of establishing a special relationship with the UAR. Warnings were couched in terms which might be explained as referring to Western “imperialism,” but the public had been taught by then to associate “those who covet” and who attempt “disruption” with the supporters of “Unity.”

At the same time Qassem’s wish to remain on good terms with the UAR is endorsed by a testimonial which is all the more authoritative since its author composed it in a hostile spirit. Fā’iq al-Sāmarrā’ī, then Iraqi ambassador to Cairo, wrote in his letter of resignation that when he first assumed his post he was told that within two months “a link with the UAR, in the form of unity or federation, would be established.” But after Aref’s arrest “it became clear to all that my mission had lost its importance; it was now confined to preserving the existence of *friendly relations* [present author’s italics] between the two countries².”

* * *

The communist platform was made clear in the thirteen-point statement of the central committee of the Syrian Communist Party in November 1958³. Without attacking either Abdel Nasser or the union between Egypt and Syria openly, the “principles” advocated were by implication a vote of no confidence in the union, if not a declaration of war, and require little comment. The actions deemed necessary were as follows (italics are the present author’s throughout):

“to create a *parliament* and government in the *Syrian Area*, and also . . . in the *Egyptian Area*. . . These bodies shall be created *in a democratic way* on the basis of universal and free parliamentary elections” (Point one);

“to grant democratic liberties: freedom of the press, assembly, demonstration and the right to strike, freedom of trade unions and the right of all the people and *patriotic forces to free political association*” (Point two);

“to strengthen *fraternal relations* with the Republic of Iraq”(Point three);

“to safeguard the Syrian economy. . . and make every effort to ensure its expansion. . .” (Point six);

² *Ahrām*, March 28, 1959.

³ *WMR*, Feb. 1959, pp. 61–3.

"to put trade and economic relations between Syria and Egypt on a normal footing. . ." (Point seven);

"to respect the *patriotic and democratic traditions* of Syrian students. . ." (Point thirteen).

Point three implied the rejection of the movement for "Unity now" in Iraq, and Points six and seven hinted at the growing belief in Syria that the economy was being bled for the benefit of Egypt.

Around the same time, the central committee of the Iraqi Communist Party issued two statements which were even more outspoken than the Syrian declaration and dealt almost exclusively with Iraqi-UAR relations⁴.

The Iraqi communists, it was maintained, were "ready to fight to the last drop of blood together with the nationalists for freedom and democracy, Arab unity, peace and progress." Yet, "in the guise of national unity, the right bourgeois parties" were trying to induce Iraq to join the UAR; moreover, they were "agitating for adoption of the single-party system as in Egypt".

The statement elaborated the communist objection to both policies: "In essence, this call for a single party is a call for struggle against the Communist Party," while "when we hear talk of joining the UAR we feel great concern for the future of our democratic rights, for we know that there is no freedom for parties or public organizations in the UAR, no freedom of speech."

It was not only for its own existence that the ICP professed concern: "Iraq might, in the event of her joining the UAR, be deprived of the necessary conditions for economic development, and remain economically a backward area."

The ICP took into account "the diversity of historical and material conditions in the Arab countries" and was guided by the principle that "within the framework of this [federal] unity it is necessary to guarantee the interests of the various sections of the people and also the interests of all the countries."

Lest the professed goal of a pan-Arab federation might be taken at face value, the second statement concluded:

"The task *now* is to consolidate the revolutionary gains and the revolutionary system."

It is remarkable that an Arab communist party here invokes historical diversity as an argument against political unification.

* * *

⁴ *WMR*, Feb. 1959, pp. 72-3.

Abdel Nasser was always eager to disavow any charge that to him *qawmiyya* meant the enticement of possibly reluctant Arab states to unite with the UAR. For this reason he used to stress the nonconstitutional aspects of *qawmiyya* as well as his personal disinterest in a political merger. However, on November 13, 1958, a public address delivered at Minya, in Upper Egypt, mirrored his innermost convictions on the nature and significance of *qawmiyya*, although they must be divested of layers of verbiage and allusions⁵:

Abdel Nasser defined Arab nationalism as the struggle to achieve full independence, freedom and unity for the Arab nation. Whenever the nation struggled as one, it triumphed; whenever it was divided, it was dominated by imperialism. Abdel Nasser's position therefore was that "we" have ever declared that we saw in Arab nationalism the only security for every Arab country, and the feeling was shared by Arabs everywhere. Arab nationalism was as old as the nation—it defeated Napoleon after he had subjugated all Europe. This generation, however, had an appointment with destiny to achieve its aims, and the "supreme union" of Syria with Egypt was the fruit of its yearnings and struggles. The struggle was continuous, and the banner of Arab nationalism would be hoisted, not by Gamal Abdel Nasser himself but "by the Arab people in every Arab country." *The leadership, indeed, must be unified; Abdel Nasser, while only a soldier of Arab nationalism, was "present at the moment to carry on this mission on your behalf, on behalf of this people."*

Baghdad Radio ignored the speech—an omission without precedent since the Iraqi revolution which was duly noted by Cairo⁶. Abdel Nasser himself evidently realized that he had committed a gaffe; a fortnight later in another speech he explained that it was the unity of hearts that mattered, to unite against imperialism; this unity between Abdel Nasser and Qassem the imperialists would not be able to destroy. He had never meant to speak about "unity or union in a constitutional sense⁷." This time the Iraqi press noted the speech with satisfaction.

* * *

In the early part of 1959 it was often claimed by UAR spokesmen that during the first half year after the revolution Abdel Nasser had repeatedly invited Qassem to a personal meeting—four times, Abdel Nasser him-

⁵ R. Cairo, Nov. 13 [15], 1958.

⁶ SWB, Nov. 17, 1958 (editorially); by Haykal in *Ahrām*, Jan. 27, 1959.

⁷ R. Cairo, Nov. 28 [29], 1958.

self later said. Qassem either hedged or ignored the invitation; because of his "inferiority complex"—to quote Abdel Nasser again—he did not wish to be outshone by the UAR leader. There can be no doubt that Abdel Nasser did suggest meetings with Qassem. Mājīd Amīn, Mahdawī's chief prosecuting counsel, admitted that an invitation to Damascus had been received but alleged that it had been staged for Qassem's assassination⁸.

It is difficult to guess what were Qassem's true motives for avoiding a meeting. An "inferiority complex" probably did enter into them, for it could hardly be a meeting of equals; but there were valid tactical considerations also. Since Qassem was convinced that Abdel Nasser was threatening Iraqi independence in the name of Arab unity, he may have seen no reason why he should enhance the prestige of the Egyptian leader while risking alienation of the anti-*waḥda* front in Iraq by a pretended fraternization.

* * *

Until about mid-December relations between the two governments were outwardly normal. That all was not well beneath the surface was asserted at the time by the not disinterested, but observant and usually well-informed, Voice of Israel radio. This diagnosis was confirmed in Cairo after the Shawwāf revolt, when nothing further was to be gained by a show of good fellowship.

Immediate UAR reactions to the discovery of "a plot" announced by Qassem on December 8 affected to show the unconcern of a bystander. This attitude was facilitated by the discretion of official circles in Baghdad where no allusion had as yet been made either to Rashīd 'Ālī as principal or to complicity on the part of the UAR. Hints from Baghdad Radio that there was a connection between the plot and Rountree's scheduled visit to Iraq were simplified by UAR sources into American direction of the plot.

At the same time cooperation broke down over defence. According to Muḥammad Ḥasanayn Haykal, a UAR military mission had arrived in Baghdad on November 8, 1958, to discuss "the situation along the borders with Israel"; on the Iraqi side were Brig. Shākir Maḥmūd Shukrī, Assistant Chief-of-Staff, and "the two communist colonels" Taha al-Shaykh Aḥmad, director of planning, and Jalāl al-Awqātī, Commander of the Air Force. With the enthusiastic support of Shukrī, and despite the difficulties which the leftist Iraqi members were said to have made, an agreement was drawn up which Qassem signed. Although frequent reminders were sent from the

⁸ *Protocols*, XII, p. 173.

UAR during November and December, however, Qassem never issued the orders which would bring the agreement into effect⁹. The UAR government then allowed the matter to lapse.

In mid-December the situation took a sharp turn for the worse when the Syrian communists came under direct attack from the authorities. There were mass arrests and the communist and pro-communist press was closed down. Damascus Radio and the surviving, strictly directed, newspapers opened a ferocious attack on the communists as foreign agents and traitors to Arab nationalism. On December 23 the campaign was joined at highest level when Abdel Nasser, at Port Said, publicly denounced the communist parties of the Middle East in the same vein¹⁰.

The leftist sympathizers in the Iraqi press took up the cudgels on behalf of the communists at once, even before Abdel Nasser's Port Said speech. The regime in Iraq became involved through the proceedings at Mahdāwī's court.

Mahdāwī saw no harm in obliging his political friends with asides referring to "fake nationalism," which were attributed in Cairo to Qassem's influence. The trials of Rashid 'Ālī and Aref were held in camera. But on December 22 the court had resumed public sittings, and the president's shafts directed at the UAR were no longer buffered by official secrecy.

The propaganda organs of the UAR responded. It was more than the future of Iraq that was at stake; Haykal gave the point of view of Cairo with clearness when he wrote: "The beating of drums by the ICP against 'Unity' in Baghdad was meant to be heard not only in Iraq, but also to echo in Damascus¹¹." Qassem was too obviously shielding the ICP and Mahdāwī not to become a target for Cairo propaganda within a very short time. From the end of December 1958 Cairo news reports no longer maintained the semblance of detachment, and provided lurid accounts of "communist rule" at Baghdad. Mahdāwī and his "circus" became unfailing subjects of vilification. Mahdāwī was not only a clown, a boor and a sadist who gloried in the destruction of every nationalist he could lay hands on, he was a felon who had stolen five hundred bags of coal under the old regime and a coward who had hidden in his house on July 14; his only claim to his post was "a certain connection which he enjoyed."

Throughout January 1959 the propaganda warfare between the two countries intensified. So far, the broadsides were not generally directed against the principals on both sides, the right of the respective regimes to

⁹ *Ahrām*, April 4, 1959; *Protocols*, XIII, pp. 19-20.

¹⁰ *R. Cairo*, Dec. 23 [29], 1958.

¹¹ *Ahrām*, Jan. 27, 1959.

exist was not challenged nor the burning question of political "Unity" ventilated¹². But less direct issues, like assertions of communist influence in Iraq, counter-allegations as to the absence of "democracy" in the UAR, and mutual accusations of disloyalty to Arab policies regarding imperialism and Israel were pressed without reserve. Towards the end of the month, the Cairo weekly *Akhbār al-Yawm* published its own version of the Aref trial, and Haykal, in an "open letter" to Qassem, expressed "bewilderment" at the policy of detachment from the Arab cause and of allowing the communists freedom of action¹³. Beneath reiterated invocations of Qassem as "Your Excellency the Sole Leader" the letter conveyed sneering imputations that Qassem was a fool ridden by inferiority feelings who cared for nothing but the empty honours of his position.

Sources in the UAR now took up a new epithet for the communists, *shu'ūbiyya*, rendered as "factionalism" by the Middle-East English press although "anti-Arabism" would be more exact¹⁴. The accusation of running counter to the Arab mainstream stigmatised the communists in subsequent years, together with the appellation *fawḍāwiyyūn*, "anarchists." The response of communists and their supporters was on a similar level. Mahdāwī was vehement with charges of "pharaonism" against Egypt. A typical innuendo was the praise of Qassem in the Iraqi press as "the only democratic leader in the Middle East."

At the official level relations suffered through the failure of the Arab Economic Conference held in Cairo in the first half of January 1959. The Iraqi delegation was headed by the Minister of Economic Affairs, Dr. Ibrāhīm Kubba, a communist in all but party membership. Kubba was not the man to relieve tension in the prevailing atmosphere, even had he been of more accommodating disposition. His report, published after his return to Baghdad, was a biting indictment of the ill will, the evasions and the selfishness which he asserted he had met at the hands

* ¹² This trace of restraint applied mainly to propaganda addressed to Arabs. Kurdish transmissions of Baghdad Radio and Hebrew transmissions of Cairo Radio were much more outspoken on the central issue.

¹³ *Ahrām*, Jan. 27, 1959.

¹⁴ On the original *shu'ūbiyya* Goldziher wrote that it earnestly demanded, in the name of the Koran, equal consideration for non-Arabs together with Arabs; a bolder version of the doctrine even stated that non-Arabs were superior ("Die Shu'ubijja", *Muhammedanische Studien*, I. Teil, Halle, 1889, p. 147). It is revealing that the modern nationalists should have identified these concepts with the reluctance of Arab communists to accept political unity under Abdel Nasser's leadership. Syrian Ba'this had called the communists *shu'ūbiyyin* since the mid-fifties.

of the UAR delegation and in the Egyptian press in response to his offers of cooperation for the common good¹⁵. There were abundant objective grounds for disagreement between the two countries in the field covered by the conference. In particular, the project for an Arab Monetary Foundation for Economic Development, in its UAR interpretation, appeared as yet another tool designed to advance Egyptian domination of the Arab world¹⁶. On the other hand, the timing, tenor and content of Kubba's complaints show clearly that they were as much intended for political consumption as for serving the interests of his department.

* * *

In February both sides eased their vilification campaign in the mass communications media, although the communist advance in Iraq continued in full force. Qassem's restraint in public may have acted as a modifier, as well as the show of courtesy he accorded to the UAR whenever his own standing was not in question. On January 27 he addressed the UAR Air Force officers stationed in Iraq for the past six months in a short but dignified and friendly speech, just before their unostentatious departure for home¹⁷. His congratulations to Abdel Nasser on the first anniversary of the UAR received a civil reply, which was hailed by nationalist circles in Baghdad who of late had little cause for rejoicing.

The communist position had not altered, however. This was made clear at the Twenty-first Congress of the CPSU at Moscow, held from January 27 to February 5, 1959, where Bakdāsh and Salām 'Ādil stressed the links between the Syrian and Iraqi communist parties in their struggle for democratic freedom; Bakdāsh defined Arab unity as "first and foremost a movement for liberation from imperialism¹⁸." At a lower level there was a communist demonstration in front of the UAR Embassy in Baghdad on February 22 while the anniversary of the Union was being celebrated inside. The police—UAR sources claimed—looked on while embassy guests were being assaulted outside the gates¹⁹.

The comparative lull during February in the attacks of the opponent camps evidently preluded the storm. There are convincing indications that both governments knew that an army revolt was impending in Iraq. Consequently they may have been willing to damp the ardour of their supporters until the open trial of strength took place.

¹⁵ *R. Baghdad*, Jan. 14—*IMB*, Jan. 15, 1959.

¹⁶ *Hayāt*, Jan. 10, 1959; *NYT*, Jan. 14, 1959. Iraq did not sign the agreement.

¹⁷ *R. Baghdad*, Jan. 27 [29], 1959.

¹⁸ *Pravda-Mizan*, Feb. 1959, App. A, pp. 4–12.

¹⁹ *R. Cairo*, Feb. 25 [27], 1959.

CHAPTER 13 THE SHAWWĀF REVOLT

On March 24, a fortnight after the Shawwāf revolt, Qassem said at a press conference that he had known of the plot in advance, that it had been inevitable, and that he had let it mature "so that every citizen should realize his position and take stock¹."

Qassem did not need the gift of second sight, or even an outstanding intelligence service, to realize early in 1959 that a military rising against him was brewing in the north.

The Rashīd 'Ālī plot had more substance than the Aref affair, but it was clearly as inconclusive as the grievances which called it forth were real and intensifying. Qassem's claim to the Sole Leadership and the jettisoning of the Council of Revolutionary Command, the communist upsurge, the estrangement from the UAR and the disappointment of Arab nationalist hopes, the downgrading of tribal influence linked with agrarian reform had all contributed; the insults and injuries sustained, the fears for the future, were all festering. On the other hand, no decisive battle had been joined.

Rashīd 'Ālī's plot had shown that two commanders of army divisions—Brig. Nāzīm al-Tabaqchālī of the Second Division at Kirkuk and Brig. 'Abd al-'Azīz al-'Uqaylī of the First Division at Diwaniya—and certainly one of their brigade commanders in each case—Col. 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Shawwāf at Mosul and Col. 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Rāwī at Basra—were at least passively disloyal.

'Uqaylī, whose command covered the southern half of the country—seven provinces out of fourteen—had never been in the position to raise a rebellion with a reasonable chance of effective local support. The Shi'i population, though chronically disaffected, certainly did not favour Arab nationalism with its Sunni tincture. The communists were strong in the towns and well organised. The peasants in the region had more to gain from agrarian reform than anywhere else in the country. The tribal chiefs had been involved in the Rashīd 'Ālī affair to a greater degree than their

¹ *Mid. Mir.*, March 29, 1959.

brethren in the north and would guard their steps for the time being.

Conditions were different in the north, where the four provinces of Kirkuk, Mosul, Erbil and Sulaimaniya made up the command of the Second Division. The population of the region was heterogeneous, but each of the main components—Kurds, Sunni Arabs, Turcomans—was largely concentrated in its own compact area, and a resolute lead against Baghdad might evoke a mass response from at least one of the groups. Because of this fragmentation there was no strong reason why the centre of a military revolt in the north should be at divisional headquarters. Other objections to divisional leadership were that the brigade group with its integrated supporting elements was the true operational formation in the Iraqi army, and, most important, that Ṭabaqchalī, the divisional commander, was too hesitant to recommend himself as the effective leader of an action which might be the prelude to civil war.

The necessary prerequisites were much better met by Ṭabaqchalī's subordinate, Col. 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Shawwāf, since the revolution commander of the Fifth Brigade garrisoning Mosul Province. Shawwāf came of an ancient and pious Sunni family and was by background and conviction anti-communist and an Arab nationalist. He had been an early member of the Free Officers. He was a man of action and held a senior appointment—before July 14 he had been a battalion commander, like Aref. As his statements during the mutiny indicated, he had been deeply offended by Qassem's elimination of the Free Officers' political influence. Neither a clever plotter nor a dissimulator, he let himself be impelled by developments, but he was energetic and capable of inspiring loyalty.

Shawwāf also had the advantages of his command: his brigade was a much sharper tool than Ṭabaqchalī's division. His sub-area, although including a substantial Kurdish minority, harboured a traditionally conservative Arab Sunni majority impatient of Baghdad rule and closely tied by blood and feeling, as well as economically, to northern Syria. A power in the land was Aḥmad 'Ājil al-Yāwir, paramount shaykh of the northern Shammar confederation which stretched from Mosul Province into the Syrian Jazira. As a tribal chief and one of the greatest landowners in northern Iraq, Yāwir could be counted upon as an ally against "communism."

During the first two months of 1959 Mosul was the only major town in Iraq where the nationalists were holding their own and could count on support from the local military authorities. The bloody clashes which occurred there were not, as in Baghdad, the outcome of a communist-inspired campaign to drive their opponents from the streets and coffee-houses. They were battles over an undecided issue constituting a small-scale civil war, with the honours often tilted in favour of the nationalists.

The anti-communist attitude of brigade headquarters in Mosul had been noted by both sides even before the revolt.

* * *

Secret negotiations on joint action had been conducted between Damascus representatives and the Shammar after a working alliance between Qassem and the communists was suspected and soon after agrarian reform legislation was certain to become effective—that is, in September 1958 at the latest. The officers became involved some time in the new year, probably after Shawwāf's first remonstrance with Qassem (see below).

The chief partners to the understanding on the UAR side were Lt.-Col. 'Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Sarrāj, Minister of the Interior for the Northern Region, the ultimate authority below Field Marshal Amer and Abdel Nasser himself; Muḥammad Kabbūl, who had already figured in the Rashīd 'Ālī plot (see above, p. 130); and Col. 'Abd al-Majīd Farīd, the UAR military attaché in Baghdad. Lt.-Col. Burhān 'Adham, commanding the northern area in Syria, supervised the field aspects of collaboration.

'Ājil al-Yāwir himself represented the Shammar. In the Iraqi army the movement was led by Shawwāf from his headquarters at Ghazlānī camp southwest of Mosul. Maj. Maḥmūd 'Azīz, the brigade major, was his right-hand man. Other subordinates of Shawwāf who took important roles in the preliminary stages were Lt.-Cols. 'Azīz Aḥmad Shihāb, Yūsuf Kashmūla and Ibrāhīm al-Gaylānī, Capt. Nāfi' Dāwūd, Lt. Khayrallah 'Askar, and Lt. Maḥmūd Ḥaydarān, commander of Rabī'a frontier post. Outside the Fifth Brigade the conspiracy included in an active capacity Shawwāf's superior officer, Brig. Ṭabaqchālī, Col. Mūnir Fahmī al-Jarrāḥ, commanding the Third Brigade at Erbil, Brig. 'Uqaylī, Col. Rif'at al-Ḥājj Sirrī, the director of military intelligence, Col. 'Abd al-Laṭīf al-Darrājī, Col. Ṭāhir Yaḥyā, and Brig. Nājī Ṭālib, the ex-Minister of Social Affairs, now without an official position.

At Mosul, members of the Jalīlī, Kashmūla, Jūmard, 'Umārī and Muftī families, prominent among the Arab Sunnis and mainly landowners, were apprised of the proposed rising. An especially close confidant of Shawwāf was the veteran Mosul author and politician Maḥmūd al-Durra, a former Istiqlāl member.

The Ba'th Party did not play an important part, although its leaders were certainly cognizant of the plot².

² A civilian Ba'thi, Fāḍil al-Shakra, went to Mosul and joined the mutiny there. Shakra sulked, it is hinted, that his offer to assassinate Qassem was not acted on by the Ba'th regional command at Baghdad, although it was accepted on principle (Rikābi, p. 29). Shakra was executed after the revolt.

The main objectives of the movement were the elimination of communist influence, the restoration to the Free Officers of a real share in political power, and a return to harmonious relations with the UAR. The concrete plans were not so definite, but two stages are recognisable. At first it was hoped that less than a total upheaval involving the forcible removal or death of Qassem would suffice: Qassem would remain as Prime Minister, but his powers would be decisively clipped by appointing Nāji Tālib Minister of Defence. Moreover, the Council of Revolutionary Command would be installed at last, composed of the President of the Sovereignty Council, the Prime Minister, the Minister of Defence, the Chief of Staff, the army divisional commanders, and Col. Tāhir Yaḥyā.

When it was recognized that this first plan would not be feasible—at latest with the resignation of the anti-communist ministers at the beginning of February—Qassem's removal by a fully-fledged *coup d'état* became the only alternative. The formation of a new Council of Revolutionary Command was considered, with Ṭabaqchalī as president. Its members were to be hand-picked Free Officers, no longer determined by their functions under the existing regime. This council would then appoint an equally immaculate Cabinet. There are indications that at both stages 'Abdī was earmarked to remain Chief of Staff—a testimonial to the confidence which his integrity inspired.

The question of immediate merger with the UAR was not definitively treated at the highest level of the conspiracy, whatever the hopes and aspirations of the individual partners or the talk in the lower echelons. On the other hand, the fact that so many of the chief military conspirators belonged to "good" families of old standing in Iraq—the Rāwī, Shawwāf, Ṭabaqchalī, 'Umarī and many others—underlines the mainly anti-communist, or even anti-progressive, character of the project. The point was not lost on leftist circles after the event, whose charges that the revolt was a reactionary plot were made with greater justification than usual.

* * *

Throughout January and February the cities of Baghdad, Kameshli, Aleppo and Damascus, with Mosul the nodal point, were involved in preparations for the revolt. Small-arms depots were assembled at Tel Kotchek in Syria, near the Iraqi frontier. From there the weapons were smuggled into Iraq for the use of the Shammar and other civilians in the plot as well as of the Fifth Brigade itself, which, in accordance with traditional Iraqi government policy, was kept short of ammunition. On the eve of the revolt equipment for setting up a complete broadcasting station was added to the consignments.

The conspirators did not decide lightly to resort to force. They tried to turn Qassem, by a mixture of persuasion and threats, from the path he had taken. According to Maj. Maḥmūd 'Azīz, who took refuge in Syria after the rising, Shawwāf and Ṭabaqchalī went to Baghdad at the end of December and warned Qassem of the danger that might be expected from the communist upsurge. Qassem fobbed them off with small talk³. Before the revolt UAR and pro-UAR sources reported that senior Free Officers had appealed to Qassem to stop communist infiltration, restore harmony with the "liberated Arab countries" and form a Council of Revolutionary Command⁴.

Qassem could not be induced to swerve, and preparations for the overthrow went on. To begin with, the night of March 4-5 was fixed for a takeover of Baghdad, to proceed along the traditional lines of occupation of the Ministry of Defence, the army camps, the airports, and Broadcasting House. In the present coup Darrajī was to play Aref's role and one of 'Uqaylī's units would re-enact that of the Twentieth Brigade of eight months earlier. Sirrī was to arrest Qassem.

However, this time the Baghdad garrison was commanded by determined supporters of the regime—Brig. Khalīl Sa'id of the Third Division and Brig. Ismā'il 'Ārif of the Twenty-fifth Brigade. The unchallenged domination of the Baghdad "street" by the communists and their para-military organizations was also a severe handicap, and might be the determining factor in a struggle where the military force could not rely on superior strength over opposing units. Lastly, Qassem and his allies were undoubtedly alert. The date was therefore postponed for a fortnight until the leaders of the plot in Baghdad and the south felt better assured of military support. Apparently the delay was opposed by Shawwāf who felt that he was fully prepared and predicted that the government was bound to turn its attention to Mosul before long. It did.

* * *

On March 1 the Baghdad press reported that 'Abdī had authorized a Peace Partisans rally in Mosul on March 6, and that it was to be a national event. During the following few days signs could be glimpsed that the

³ *MENA*, March 9 [10], 14 [16], 1959. Maḥmūd 'Azīz said that in reply to Shawwāf's pleading Qassem gave the officer an autographed photograph of himself inscribed, "To my noble brother, Shawwāf." This touch appears too weird to be invented.

⁴ Among the reports was that of Haykal in *Ahrām*, Jan. 31, 1959.

government and the Left were making concerted efforts to ensure that the greatest possible number of participants would go to Mosul; meetings elsewhere were cancelled, and special transport was arranged by road and rail at reduced fares. By March 5 the partisans were streaming into the city in tens of thousands, and their total number at Mosul a day or two later was estimated at 250,000—a truly frightening host⁵. It was noted that the Peace Partisans arriving at Mosul were armed—“the first such instance⁶.” At a personal meeting a frenzied last-minute appeal from Shawwāf to Qassem to cancel the rally had no effect⁷.

Competent observers have maintained since that Qassem engineered the Peace Partisans rally with the purpose of forcing Shawwāf's hand. Such an interpretation, which presumes an invitation to violence, is probably too extreme: from what we know of Qassem it is unlikely that he would have inflated a dangerous situation, so long as it could be deflated. More probably he intended the rally as a warning to Shawwāf, a demonstration of strength, and a deterrent, since the presence of the leftist multitude in Mosul would turn the balance of forces against the nationalists.

By March 5 the transfer of arms from across the Syrian frontier assumed the regularity of an organized shuttle service, and weapons were distributed to collaborating civilians of tribe and town. The Fifth Brigade was commanded to stand by on the same day, an order which could not in itself be construed as a mutinous act in view of the growing tension in Mosul.

On the morrow, Friday, March 6, the rally took place. The main event was a monster gathering at the large city stadium in the afternoon. No pointed reference was made in the speeches to relations with the UAR or to the situation which had drawn the Peace Partisans to Mosul. However, as was to be expected, clashes and brawls flared among the crowds milling in the streets and coffee-houses. The situation became worse next morning when demonstrations and counter-demonstrations were held around the town and threatened to grow out of hand. No appreciable exodus of Peace Partisans had taken place. Their representatives who complained to Shawwāf of provocations and armed assaults by “reactionary elements” received an evasive reply.

On the same day, March 7, Shawwāf decided to cross the Rubicon. He communicated his decision to Sirrī in Baghdad and to Ṭabaqchalī. Sirrī concurred, although he may have been reluctant to do so; Ṭabaqchalī, who counselled restraint and delay, was impatiently brushed aside. Shawwāf

⁵ *Mid. Mir.*, March 8, 1959.

⁶ *Ālam—R. Damascus*, March 8 [10], 1959.

⁷ Thus Maḥmūd ‘Azīz, quoted by *MENA*, March 14 [16], 1959.

gave orders for the implementation of his "security plan"—virtually a state of siege—which entailed the dispersal of public gatherings by force if necessary. A plan of action against selected targets in the Baghdad area was agreed with Lt.-Col. 'Abdallah Nāji, commander of Mosul Air Base, where the Seventh Squadron of Fury piston-engined fighters was stationed. The signal for revolt was given to Shawwāf's subordinate and confidant, Lt.-Col. 'Alī Tawfiq al-Khālidi, commanding officer of the First Battalion and commander of 'Aqra garrison in the Kurdish north close to Barzan and the Turkish frontier. Meanwhile attempts to assemble the broadcasting station crated from Syria were unsuccessful, and valuable time was lost while staff officers hunted for an expert to put it in working order.

On the night of March 7–8 Shawwāf in collaboration with Durra composed his first "Manifesto" to the Iraqi nation. At the same time nationalists from all over Mosul were summoned to Ghazlāni camp according to previously prepared lists and with the help of the local mukhtars. There they received arms and makeshift uniforms and were returned to the city to form pickets, to man vantage points and to cordon off concentrations of communists. Also during that night officers from brigade headquarters, aided by this newly created special force, arrested numbers of leading Peace Partisans and Mosul communists, and conveyed them to Hajariyya barracks in town where they were locked up under harsh conditions.

Meanwhile chaos was mounting in the city. The ill-directed and unorganized nationalist militia failed to serve as a containing force. The police, appealed to from all sides, were helpless, and apparently stayed off the streets. Now the Shammar were streaming into town as the Peace Partisans had done two days before and the Kurds would do two days later. During the morning hours of March 8 the brawling escalated into warfare. Shawwāf ordered out infantry detachments and the brigade military police to break up the parades which were making for the barracks where their leaders were imprisoned, calling in deafening chorus for the Sole Leader. The military opened fire. Some of the demonstrators broke and fled; others forged on although they were deflected from their target for the present.

UAR flags appeared over the town⁸. The crisis had come.

* * *

⁸ 'Adnān Shalmirān, a leading Mosul communist, said at a press conference a fortnight later that brigade headquarters flew the UAR flag during the revolt (*IT*, March 24, 1959). Disinterested witnesses have denied this. It is unlikely that Shawwāf should have committed himself to this extent at so early a stage of the rising; his statements over Mosul Radio were the acme of discretion so

In the late morning of Sunday, March 8, Shawwāf's revolutionary Manifesto became public knowledge. Still later the broadcasting station was finally put into operation. "Radio Mosul" became audible at least twelve hours after schedule, although the issue would hardly have been affected if it had been working earlier.

The Manifesto was issued in the name of "Col. 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Shawwāf, Leader of the Revolution," who claimed to act in agreement with Brig. Ṭabaqchalī, commander of the Second Division. It stated that the glorious revolution of July 14 had been corrupted by a "mad tyrant" who in his thirst for power had adopted "an anarchistic group" with a "specific political ideology and no popular support." Their collaboration had led to the detention of thousands of innocent citizens, to the purge of national elements from government and authority, to a grave deterioration of the economy, and to "violent war against the Arab nation."

The Manifesto called for the immediate resignation of Qassem, the communists' "idol with the defective mind," and of his "opportunistic group." Then the Sovereignty Council, in cooperation with the Council of Revolutionary Command, would appoint a Cabinet to proceed along the course set by the July 14 revolution. This path would lead to "a just social life, a socialist economic policy and a cooperative democracy"; the Agrarian Reform Law would be "properly implemented and applied." Its foreign policy would be Positive Neutralism, with the Soviet Union mentioned foremost among the friends who had helped Iraq and the Arab nation in their past trials. Oil agreements, in particular, would be honoured.

In the meantime, until "constitutional government" was restored, Shawwāf took upon himself the burden of "administering the country." "Subversive elements" were warned of the "severe blows" that they would suffer if they tried to sabotage the work of salvation⁹.

Supplementary bulletins stressed Qassem's iniquity in debarring the original Revolutionary Council from power, charged the officers with the longest service in each army unit with responsibility to Shawwāf for all

far as relations with the UAR were concerned. On the other hand, many reports do state that UAR flags were flown in Mosul during the revolt. The rising was not a homogeneous or rigidly controlled affair, and many partisans, military as well as civilians, had fervent convictions on the matter which they would be eager to demonstrate.

⁹ This paraphrase is based on the proclamation as monitored in London from *R. Mosul*, March 9 [10], 1959, early in the morning; it is evidently a repetition of the original broadcast. Other, slightly differing, versions were broadcast from Damascus and Cairo late on March 8, as allegedly monitored by those stations.

affairs in their area, and forbade the payment of oil royalties to Baghdad.

At 4.30 p.m. the regime at Baghdad broadcasted a number of announcements concerning the events in the north in rapid succession. First, a Republican Decree was read pensioning off Shawwāf, with immediate effect. Then Qassem, as Commander-in-Chief, appointed Brig. Yūnis Muḥammad Ṭāhir to the command of the Fifth Brigade. Ṭāhir was an undistinguished officer with a local background who chanced to be in Kirkuk at the time of the mutiny. Another order from Qassem instructed "officers and other ranks of the Fifth Brigade" to arrest Shawwāf "for having cooperated with foreigners against the interests of the state and for plotting against the safety of the immortal Iraqi Republic." The order was repeated and elaborated by 'Abdī, and a price of ID 10,000 was set on Shawwāf's head, if captured alive or dead. Col. Bāmīrnī, commander of the Popular Resistance Force, ordered his subordinate in Mosul "to crush the traitors and plotters." The national organizations conveyed their "fiery indignation" over the signatures of ICP members, and dutiful messages of support started to flow in, including one purporting to come from Ṭabaqchalī.

* * *

When Shawwāf set out to clear Mosul by military means he had to assume that his soldiers would follow him. Here he was on dangerous ground. The revolt was an officers' mutiny, and his grudges were officers' grudges. The men could not be expected to sulk over Qassem's failure to form a Council of Revolutionary Command, or to be scared of agrarian reform. Moreover, the soldiers of the Second Division were largely Kurds who were distrustful of Arab *qawmiyya*, so far as it meant anything to them, whereas the Kurdish officers were dispersed throughout the army with less representation in the north than elsewhere. This matter had been attended to by Nuri, and Qassem knew better than to make a change. The extend of communist penetration in the army should not be exaggerated. But it became obvious during the trials of the mutineers that there had been communist representatives in probably every sub-unit, mostly non-commissioned officers who busied themselves with "education" and enjoyed considerable prestige among the men. Shawwāf and his group, on the other hand, had given no thought to preparing the minds of their troops for the ordeal ahead. When the test came, Shawwāf found himself with an enthusiastic minority and a moderately compliant majority of officers, but no solid section of other ranks to count on.

Even when the military was first sent into action against the crowds there were instances of organised insubordination. By nightfall of March 8

considerable groups of soldiers, led by their NCOs, cheered Qassem in the streets and called for vengeance on the traitors. One major unit, the divisional Field Engineers Regiment stationed near Mosul, had refused, under its commander Lt.-Col. 'Abdallah al-Shāwī, to follow suit from the first; it was rapidly becoming involved in a fight with troops remaining loyal, for the time being, to their mutinous officers. Brigade headquarters and the main barracks were still firmly held by the insurgents, but their confidence was oozing. In the evening Qassem tried to dissuade Maḥmūd 'Aziz and other staff officers from their allegiance in a personal telephone conversation. He received brave refusals—with what secret trepidation can only be conjectured; Shawwāf himself, Maḥmūd later reported, was by then completely dejected, and only eager to achieve an honourable death. In these circumstances a decision to send two Furies the following day to bomb the transmitting station of Baghdad Radio at Abu Ghayb was a gesture of despair: March 8, when the silencing of Baghdad Radio might have affected the outcome, had been wasted through sheer inefficiency.

A gesture of despair of another type was the decision to dispose of the prominent leftist detainees. Maḥmūd 'Aziz undertook their execution. The first to be called out of the common cell was Kāmil Qazenchi, a "Chaldean" (Nestorian Uniate) Mosulite lately resident in Baghdad, a crypto-communist, prominent Peace Partisan, and national figure. He was shot dead as he emerged. After this his comrades refused to comply when their names were called and the confusion became so great that the killing was deferred until daylight. By March 9, however, the mutineers already had their own fate to consider.

That morning at 7 a.m. the Furies flew on their mission. One reached the target, killed a man and did some damage without hampering transmissions. Shortly after their take-off a flight of Venom jet fighters from Habbaniyya appeared over Mosul and strafed brigade headquarters. Col. Awqāṭī, the communist Commander of the Iraqi Air Force, was active in speeding their despatch. Shawwāf was lightly wounded and rushed to a dressing station. He was killed there by a Kurdish medical orderly after an exchange of shots with soldiers loyal to the regime¹⁰. The time was about 9 a.m., March 9.

* * *

Then the stampede began. The nationalists picketing the streets at once vanished, both military personnel and civilians. Lt.-Col. Shāwī sought

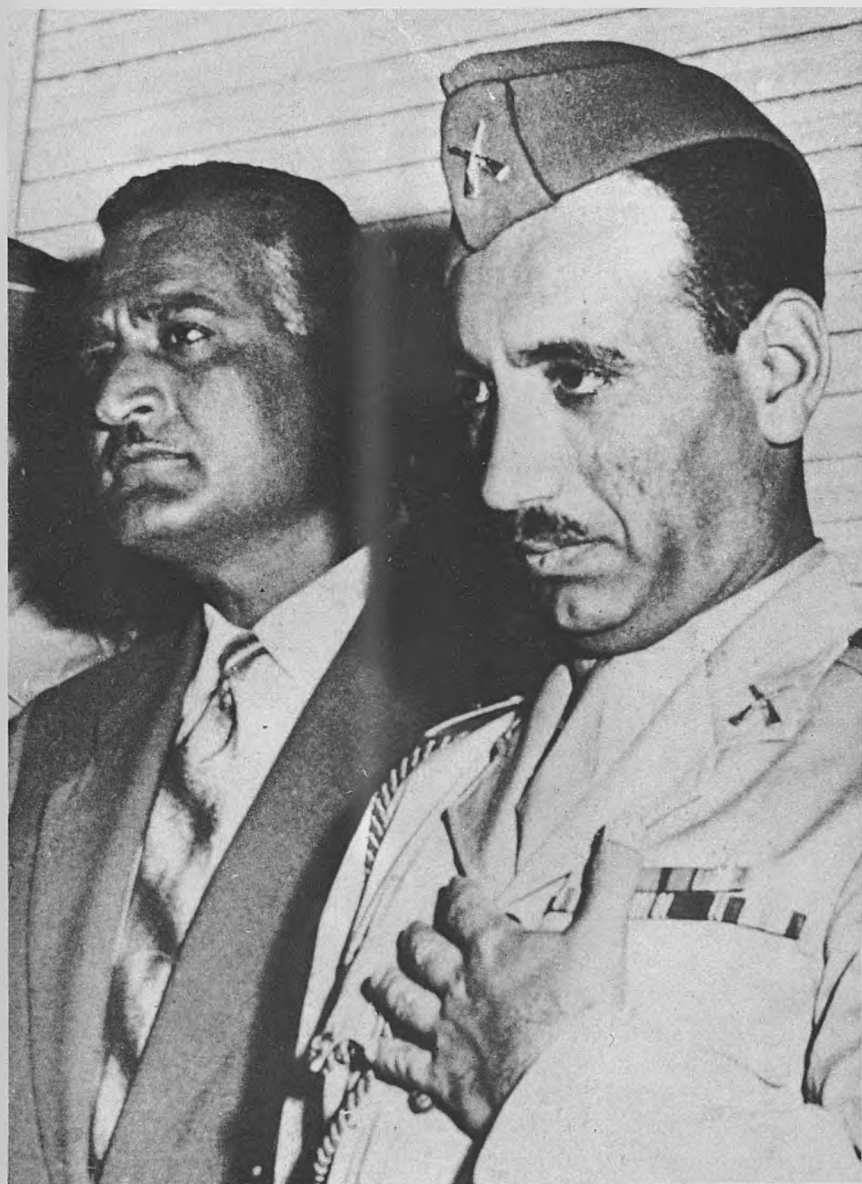
¹⁰ After Qassem's downfall those soldiers who could be caught were court-martialed and shot, including Shawwāf's killer, one Yūnis Jamil.

out 'Aziz, informed him of Shawwāf's end and enjoined him to surrender. Lt. Khayrallah 'Askar, who was with 'Aziz, shot Shāwī—his own cousin—dead. The Field Engineers, enraged by the killing of their commanding officer, stormed brigade headquarters. They encountered little opposition; the men who had hitherto adhered to Shawwāf rose against their officers, generally led by their NCOs. Loyal troops began to arrive in Mosul, the first detachment headed by Col. Ḥasan 'Abbūd, a communist in all but party membership and a former member of Maḥdāwī's investigation committee. The Popular Resistance Force got into its stride. Kurdish tribesmen, urged on by Mullā Muṣṭafā, poured down from the mountains "in self-defence against Arab chauvinism"¹¹. Their arrival signified to many horrified townspeople that wholesale slaughter of the Arab population would ensue and inspired another outbreak of murderous fighting. It was ended by armoured cars shelling the last nests of resistance.

The Shammar vanished into the westward expanses while their paramount chief's town residence was being reduced to rubble. The officers implicated in the revolt who had not been killed or imprisoned by their own men fled to the Syrian frontier, as did prominent civilian collaborators. Some, like 'Aziz, 'Askar and Durra, managed to cross. Others were killed in flight by communist oil workers in Ayn Zala, at Tel Kayf and elsewhere. One of them was Capt. 'Abd al-Jawād Ḥamid, who had captured Riḥāb Palace on July 14, 1958. Among those murdered at Tel Kayf was Mājid al-Muftī, a judge and one of the most popular notables of Mosul. The almost obsessive hatred, amounting to a collective blood feud, which anti-communist Mosulites evinced towards the inhabitants of Tel Kayf during the following years is said to have stemmed from that deed. Rebels were intercepted on their way to Syria and sent handcuffed to Baghdad as grist for Maḥdāwī. Of the two pilots who had set out to bomb the capital, one was arrested in Mosul after his return; the other attempted to reach Syria in his aircraft, crash-landed on Iraqi territory and shot himself.

"Mosul Radio" continued its broadcasts throughout March 9. The transcripts make pathetic reading with their frantic appeals for confidence and invented victories—a Qassemite army detachment had been annihilated when it was approaching Mosul, Qassem was on the point of flying abroad, Shawwāf had not been killed as reported by Baghdad Radio. . . Towards midnight the broadcasts petered out, after hours of worsening reception. Next day it was claimed in Baghdad, and later admitted by a Syrian broad-

¹¹ Thus Ibrāhīm Aḥmad.



The Nationalist Tide
'Abd al-Salām Aref and Abdel Nasser, 1958

Official Propaganda under Qassem

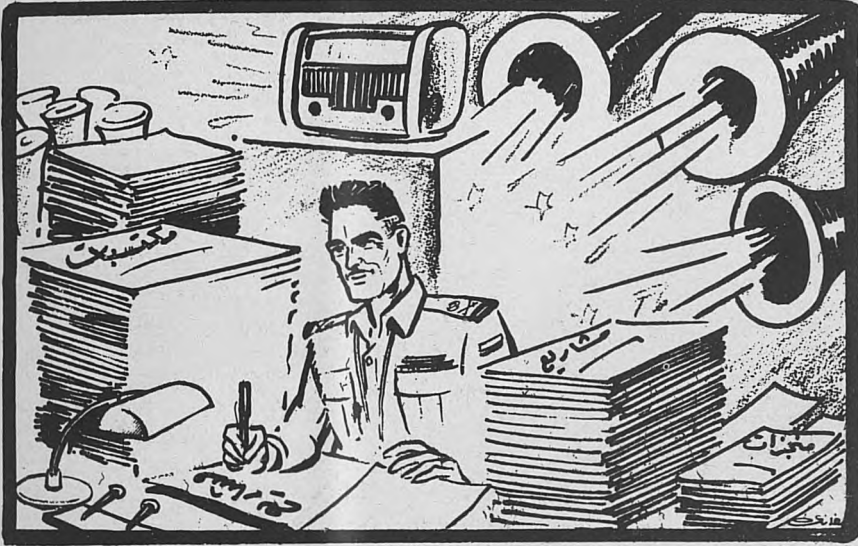


The unity of the Iraqi people

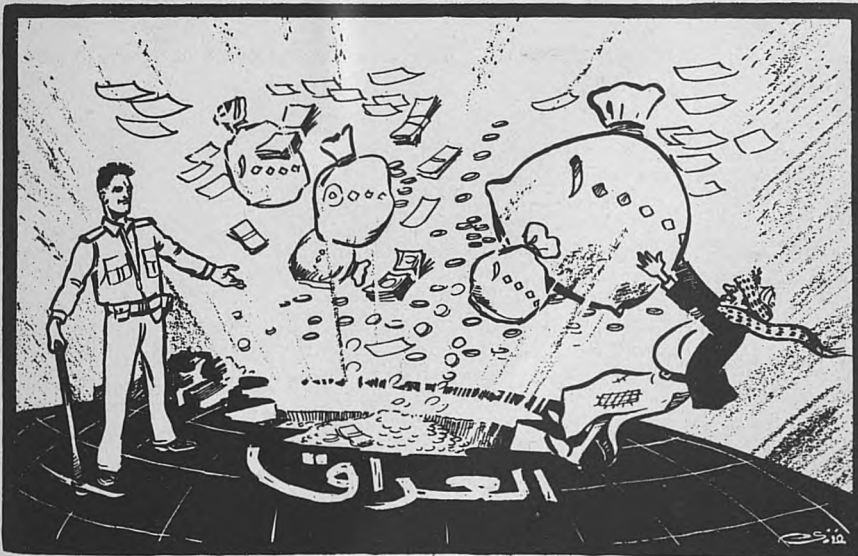


The path of neutralism

Official Propaganda under Qassem



"Undisturbed by hostile noises we proceed with planning"



The wealth of Iraq for its people
(Source Ghāzī)

The Communist Tide



Backdrop at Peace Partisans' rally, 1959

Paul Popper



Portrait vendor's ware, 1959

Paul Popper

caster, that the calls of March 9 had been transmitted from the Syrian side of the frontier¹².

* * *

In Mosul meanwhile the fury raged unabated. For the following week the city was ruled by men whose thirst for revenge was sharpened by the memory of impending death which had faced them as Shawwāf's prisoners—Capt. Maḥdī Ḥamīd, the local PRF commander and newly appointed head of brigade military police, 'Adnan Shalmirān, and 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Qaṣṣāb, all prominent Mosul communists. PRF detachments, re-organized and strengthened, continued to comb the city house by house, aided by the local Students Union and mountain Kurds. They possessed weapons in abundance; the police stores had been raided without resistance, and arms depots were carelessly guarded or opened by a sympathetic soldiery. Their captives were either shot out of hand or brought before a "revolutionary court" which Qaṣṣāb had established at police headquarters. This "court"—the *qaṣṣābiyya*, as it was later nicknamed¹³—tried scores of Shawwāf's civilian supporters, prominent among them members of the Kashmūla clan. At least seventeen persons were executed. The massacre was subsequently remembered as the Damlamāja murders, after the well on the opposite bank of the Tigris where it took place. Brig. Ṭāhir, the new brigade commander, and the civil authorities appear to have been paralysed.

The new director of police, who had arrived at Mosul as early as March 9, for the time being was unable to achieve more than the removal of Qaṣṣāb's court from the police buildings to a secondary school nearby. On March 12, however, in response to his frantic cables to Baghdad, 'Abdī issued his Notification No. 87 urging all tribesmen to return home—apparently under the mistaken impression that they were the prime movers in the chaos at Mosul. The order was largely obeyed, and 'Abdī, in Notification No. 88 of March 14, warned in sharper language "all citizens . . . to leave the duty of preserving peace and security to the responsible authorities¹⁴." Yet the *maḥkama qaṣṣābiyya* remained active until the closing days of March.

It was soon admitted by the quarters chiefly responsible that during the aftermath of the revolt people who had not been even remotely connected

¹² Ghādirī, *Al-Kitāb al-aswad*, Damascus, n.d., pp. 31–2. Ghādirī was the broadcaster.

¹³ An inevitable pun, *qaṣṣāb* meaning butcher.

¹⁴ *IT*, March 13 [15], 1959.

with it were killed, while the illegality of the "revolutionary court" was only too palpable.

The toll of victims claimed by the Shawwāf affair has been estimated from one hundred proffered by Hāshim Jawād—certainly much too low—to five thousand; *al-Hayāt*, usually well-informed, gave it as 2,426¹⁵. Both sides invoked a wealth of unsupported statistics to prove that the opponent had indulged in wholesale atrocities while the defendant was exercising superhuman restraint. However, the available evidence leaves no doubt that the number of communists and leftists who lost their lives during the revolt was very much smaller than that of the anti-communists killed in the immediate aftermath.

* * *

It was later claimed before Mahdāwī that Shawwāf's headquarters had remained in direct communication with the UAR participants in the plot and that Lt.-Col. Burhān 'Adham at Kameshli had been keeping his chiefs Sarrāj and Amer informed. This would explain how Shawwāf's Manifesto was broadcast from Damascus and Cairo before "Mosul Radio" was on the air. Among the accusations directed at the UAR was that on the morning of March 9 a squadron of Mig fighters took off from Damascus for Mosul but had been unable to touch ground because the runway of Mosul airfield was blocked; the story may have grown out of a rumour invented to boost the flagging morale of the mutineers. Finally, three hundred UAR volunteers were said to have been on their way to the frontier at Tel Kotchek, but the rising collapsed before they could cross into Iraq.

* * *

cc ✓ The nationalist rising planned for Aqra fell flat. The local population was entirely Kurdish, and while an appeal directed against Barzani might have met with some response among the Zibar and other tribes of the vicinity, the mutineers, Arabs with no understanding of Kurdish affairs, did not choose that road. All through March 8, Lt.-Col. 'Ali Tawfiq, urged on by his deputy Lt.-Col. Yūsuf Kashmūla and sustained by the majority of his officers, harangued the tribal leaders in an effort to persuade them to rise against Baghdad. His listeners were mainly noncommittal. He also made some ineffectual attempts to disperse pro-government demonstrations in the area. On the morning of March 9 he panicked and fled westwards with

¹⁵ *Hayāt*, March 14, 1959.

his supporters. Most were arrested on the way and despatched to Baghdad.

At Erbil preparations for the revolt lay in the hands of a hot-headed young captain, Dāwūd Sayyid Khalil. Col. Jarrāḥ, the brigade commander, was aware of the plot and sympathetic but showed little initiative. On March 8 Khalil mobilised a troop at headquarters and stood by for action. However, Jarrāḥ, waiting on developments, was not ready to make a move. At nightfall, when the failure of the mutiny in Mosul had become obvious, the senior officers of the brigade arrested Jarrāḥ and Khalil, and the Erbil diversion was over. During the day the civilian population gave no indication of wavering in its devotion to the regime.

Baghdad and the south took no part in the rising. Only at Karkh, a largely nationalist quarter of Baghdad on the west bank of the Tigris, Fu'ād al-Rikābī organised a demonstration in support of Shawwāf on the morning of March 9. In any event a day too late, it is said to have been attended by 150 participants. This miserably small number for Baghdad—where popular processions during the past eight months could muster tens of thousands if not hundreds of thousands of supporters—plainly shows the weakness of the nationalists at that time. Nothing was accomplished; the forlorn band did not cross the river and soon dispersed. The action of which it was to have formed part did not materialize: in Rikābī's own words, the conspirators at the Defence Ministry and elsewhere on the east bank had "their legs shackled to the ground¹⁶."

* * *

The causes of Shawwāf's débâcle are easily summed up. Ill-timed both politically and tactically, the rising was attempted against the full tide of the communist advance. It was centred on an outlying province, and not on the capital. The leader of the revolt, as well as his assistants, lacked coolness and stamina, and organizing skill. There was no real element of surprise. Another salient shortcoming that can be distinguished in retrospect is that the insurgents represented one narrow sector of the population, although a powerful one, and made little or no attempt to draw on the growing range of disaffection with Qassem's regime.

¹⁶ Rikābī, p. 24.

CHAPTER 14 THE HIGH TIDE OF COMMUNISM: THE BACKLASH OF THE REVOLT

The period from mid-March to the end of April 1959 marked the high tide of communism in Iraq under Qassem. Even then the apparent strength of the Iraqi Communist Party was much greater than its substance, and a sober analysis could have arrived at such a conclusion. After a progression of common struggle and achievements, the interests of Qassem and the communists reached their final coincidence. They were then to founder over a basic and much publicized issue which would put the relative strengths to the test.

In the wake of the collapse of the Shawwāf revolt, the huge demonstrations surging along Baghdad's Rashid Street carried placards which urged new measures on the Prime Minister.

Qassem was called upon to: *Crush the plotters; Purge the army and the administration; Arm the people; Withdraw from the Baghdad Pact without further delay; Take preventive diplomatic and punitive measures against countries which participate in plotting aggression against our country*¹.

Our period when cooperation between Qassem and the communists reached its zenith may well be first described in the light of these demands.

CRUSHING THE PLOTTERS

The press achieved something like unanimity to a greater extent than ever before or after during Qassem's regime. On March 10 and 11 demands by the incipient Journalists Association and the communist dailies for the suppression of "plotting newspapers" had no sooner been declared than they were fulfilled. On March 10 *Al-Yaqza* and *al-Hurriyya* were still able to express their disgust at the "late abortive plot" before waves of demonstrators had thrust into their offices and put their machines out of use. The same treatment was meted out to *al-Fajr al-Jadīd* and *Liwā' al-Ukhūwa al-Islāmiyya*. *Baghdad* and *Al-Muwāṭin al-'Arabī* simply ceased to appear. It seems that the Military Governor General—the only competent au-

¹ *IT*, March 10, 11, 1959

thority to deal with such outbreaks — made no attempts to interfere.

The remaining newspapers were all communist or fellow-travelling. *Al-Ahālī* alone, as before, occasionally sounded an independent note. A newcomer during the post-Shawwāf period was the biweekly *al-Insāniyya* which took a doctrinaire Marxist line. The ICP organ *Ittiḥād al-Sha'b* now became easily the most important daily in Iraq with a circulation of 35,000, against 15,000 attained by the most popular of the “bourgeois newspapers².”

Henceforth all traces of nationalist opposition vanished from the Baghdad streets where clashes and brawls had still kept the struggle alive before March 9. The stillness of this communist domain was now disturbed only by the alternation of PRF pickets on quiet days with droning processions whenever an opportunity for livelier diversion was offered: a delegation from Mosul, Dr. Kubba's return from Moscow, the secession from the Baghdad Pact, or the Peace Partisans' Congress.

Outside the capital the situation was not very different. Reports from UAR sources of pitched battles between communist and anti-Qassem forces continued but lacked reasonable foundation. In particular, the champions of Islam who had seemed a formidable adversary to communist domination in centres like Najaf and Karbala as late as the end of February had either been called off the streets or disappeared of their own accord. Probably the sole exception was Ramadi, where a serious disturbance was led by a relative of Aref in mid-March³. The communist reply was a Peace Partisan rally held there on April 10; this time there was no rising in response.

The PRF were able to renew their mass arrests of known nationalist sympathizers after the suspension of these activities by Qassem's directive of mid-January (see above, pp. 119–20). The detainees were usually delivered straight to gaols in Baghdad or provincial centres without the formality of a warrant or even a police interview. Deliberate maltreatment was common. It was only in May that conditions improved; by June, coincident with the changing balance of power, the detainees were being sent home.

Qassem did not need any urging to crush the plotters; the measures suggested themselves. The “plot” as an operation had been quashed by the time the first demonstrations against it had gathered in Baghdad; the more important participants who were still alive and in Iraq were under arrest and on their way to Baghdad and trial. As the ramifications of the conspiracy were shown, a process that took weeks of investigation, fur-

² *Pravda*, Oct. 4—*Mizan*, Oct. 1960, p. 14.

³ 'Iṣām Rashīd Ḥuwaysh; after the 14th Ramaḍān coup he became commander of the Nationalist Guard at Ramadi.

ther arrests were made, properties impounded and dismissals pronounced. Scores of prominent nationalists were exiled hundreds of miles away from their homes; this method of dealing with political suspects had been much used under the monarchy and abolished after the revolution. By the end of April the three lists of impounded properties published over 'Abdī's signature contained the names of eighty-seven persons⁴.

The Shawwāf revolt trials before Maḥdāwī began on March 24 with the hearing of four Air Force officers who had been directly involved in the bombing mission against Baghdad on March 9. Death sentences were delivered on March 28. They were carried out by a firing squad at Umm Ṭbūl range near Baghdad two days later, amidst the frenzied applause of a concourse of onlookers. The conduct of the trial was an offence to elementary concepts of common decency; but the verdict and sentences were inevitable. Qassem's approval of the executions—the first actually carried out since the revolution—was undoubtedly influenced by the uncomplicated heinousness of the offence. It is difficult to escape the conclusion that in addition he wished to throw a sop to the communists in the persons of four obscure officers whose death would cause little stir in the political world.

The second series of Shawwāf trials, of the Aqra officers, commenced on April 20; the sentences were delivered on April 30 and the death penalty was pronounced over six of the offenders. However, by then the public had recovered from the shock and hysteria following the Mosul events, and none of the death sentences was carried out.

That Qassem had not swerved even after the revolt from his general aversion to judicial bloodshed is shown by a remark of Maḥdāwī: "Our Sole Leader hears wherever he goes the cry of 'Karīm—hang, hang, hang!' But he says, 'It is not time yet; when circumstances force me, I shall hang, hang, hang!'"⁵

At the same time a policy of leniency towards supposed culprits of the old regime became apparent, although signs of it may be detected earlier. Death sentences imposed by Maḥdāwī on national leaders under the monarchy were not carried out, even if no reprieves were pronounced. On April 14, the eve of the Muslim festival of 'Īd al-Fiṭr, Qassem for the first time announced the pardon of prisoners convicted by Maḥdāwī's court, and promised further commutations. Republican Orders in the Official Gazette restored officers who had been pensioned off after the revolution to active service. A much publicized general amnesty granted to the Sham-

⁴ *IT*, April 2, 3, 23, May 1, 1959.

⁵ *Mid. Mir.*, March 22, 1959.

mar could be interpreted as a gesture to adherents of the old order rather than to Arab nationalists. According to official Iraqi sources, thousands of them accepted and returned to Iraq.

An inevitable outcome of the Shawwāf revolt was a further general tightening of security. Among the most conspicuous and irksome of the measures enforced were an order by the Military Governor General requiring every Iraqi—male and female—to carry identity papers at all times; an amendment to the Residence Law of 1938 compelling foreigners to submit details of their stay in Iraq within three days of their arrival in the country, instead of fifteen as hitherto; and an order by the Director-General of Security requiring the registration of all typewriters and duplicators, in the hope of tracing sources of illegal propaganda.

These restrictions, none of which was ever repealed, were certainly opposed to the spirit of much that had been ordained, uttered or implied by key personages of the revolutionary regime in evident good faith, not least by Qassem himself. They demonstrate how far the regime was in the grip of a siege psychosis, and indirectly represented a success for the communists, in the spirit of whose demands they were conceived. The last regulation in particular shows a bureaucracy run wild with fear of "plotting."

A measure that underlined the position into which the regime had drifted was an identity check of all Palestine refugees above fifteen years old, ordered on April 10. There were only five thousand in Iraq, but they were assumed to be particularly susceptible to pro-Nasser propaganda.

In addition, a second military court was constituted (see above, p. 39). As events were to prove in the future, the two military courts were soon transformed into a tool for cutting the communists to size; Mahdāwī's court was evidently considered unfit for this task.

THE PURGE

The purge of the army and administration broadened during the weeks that followed the Shawwāf revolt. The removal of the plotters and their direct associates had already disposed of a considerable number of anti-communists still in important posts but many members of the army and the civil and diplomatic services, in responsible though not necessarily top positions, could be presumed no better than Shawwāf and his associates at heart. It was in the common interest of Qassem and the communists to have them removed, and a weeding-out process began to deprive the army of the service of hundreds of officers who were quietly shifted into retirement. The posts thus vacated were left largely unfilled.

These changes were made at a time when the army was being asked to

assimilate large quantities of unfamiliar equipment. Since this would have imposed a severe strain in the best of circumstances, operational capacity naturally suffered. A correlative was the enhanced position attained by the non-commissioned officers in the army as a whole. These, if they held any political convictions, definitely inclined to the Left at that time. But Qassem must have considered all this a fair price to pay for excluding hostile elements, especially since no foreign war was in the offing.

In the civil and diplomatic services the official purge committees, whose existence had recently been prolonged beyond the six months originally provided for by law (see above, p. 45), also bestirred themselves to further efforts. How much the committees achieved on their own is not clear. But the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, of Social Affairs and of Education suspended or pensioned off many of their employees as a result of the committees' activities.

More important, however, were the Committees for the Defence of the Republic which had been already advocated in the ICP Memorandum of July 14. These bodies were set up by the ICP in each government department to complement the official purge committees. They drew up lists of employees whom they considered disloyal to the republic, on information supplied to them by the party. Their work was summary and effective, and in the prevailing atmosphere their "recommendations" to the heads of departments were rarely disregarded. Needless to say, all action taken at the instance of the defence committees had no legal basis and contravened the Civil Service Regulations.

Although the communist and para-communist press continued to clamour for further purges, the overall picture at the time must be considered satisfactory from the communist point of view. The question of suitable replacements was more complex.

The security appointments in the north were generally made in accordance with the wishes of the ICP, either because Qassem as yet deemed it premature to risk a "balancing" of positions or because the claim of the communists to rewards was too strong to be resisted. Ṭabaqchalī's successor as commander of the Second Division became Brig. Dāwūd Salmān al-Janābī, who had relieved Darrāji as commander of the Officers College in December 1958 after the Rashīd 'Ālī plot. Janābī was the only fully fledged ICP member to attain command of an army formation under Qassem. Col. Ḥasan 'Abbūd, the new commander of Mosul Garrison, was a communist in all but formal membership. Capt. (soon Major) Maḥdī Ḥamid, PRF commander at Mosul before and during the revolt, was appointed in charge of the PRF throughout the north, with headquarters at Kirkuk. The new commander of the Fifth Brigade—redesignated the Eleventh Brigade to

obliterate all associations with the revolt—Brig. Yūnis Muḥammad Tāhir was out of place in his surroundings; he was retired from active service within the month, reputedly at communist request and very likely to his own relief⁶. He was succeeded by Col. ‘Abbūd who remained Mosul Garrison commander also.

On the other hand, the two key General Staff appointments of Assistant Chief-of-Staff and director of military intelligence, formerly held by associates of Shawwāf, were filled by Brig. ‘Alī Ghālib ‘Azīz—in addition to his appointment as commander of the Fifth Division—and by Col. Muḥsin al-Rifa’i respectively, both of whom were “Qassem’s friends” and had no other political allegiance⁷. The command of the First Division in the south went to Brig. Sayyid Ḥamid Sayyid Ḥusayn. He was a pious Shi’i who later proved the most active persecutor of the communists to hold high command in the army under Qassem.

In particular, success was denied to the communists in one very important sector of public life—the higher rungs of local administration. Under the direction of Brig. Yaḥyā, Minister of the Interior, the hierarchy of provincial governors, district commissioners and sub-district directors remained with very few exceptions solidly non-communist and potentially anti-communist⁸.

A high civilian appointment that fell for all practical purposes to the communists was that of Director-General of Guidance and Broadcasting. Immediately after the revolt Gharbī al-Ḥājj Aḥmad, his dismissal as nationalist sympathizer long overdue, was replaced by Dhanūn Ayyūb, a well-known writer and former opposition deputy. Ayyūb’s identifiable policy invariably followed the communist line; he was generally, though mistakenly, believed to be a party member.

On April 22 the government passed the Law for the Abolition of Laws Conflicting with the Provisional Constitution and the Aims of the Revolution⁹. The laws in question had cemented Nuri’s policy of stultifying political activity of any type, and most of them had a pronounced anti-communist slant. Their abolition did no more than legalize post-revolution developments but was still an achievement over which the communists might plume themselves.

⁶ *Ahrām*, April 24, 1959; *Akhbār*, Cairo, May 5, 1959.

⁷ Col. Rifa’i had served under Qassem in Palestine.

⁸ The most conspicuous among the exceptions was Brig. ‘Abd al-Majīd Ḥasan, the—appointed—Mayor of Baghdad. He was an unstinting fellow-traveller so long as the communist ascendancy lasted; no longer.

⁹ *WI*, No. 159, April 22, 1959; *R. Baghdad*, May 3 [5], 1959.

ARMING THE PRF

The communist importunities "to arm the PRF" clothed a device that would put an operational fighting force at the disposal of the ICP. Technically the proposed arrangement would permit PRF members to retain firearms as part of their personal equipment instead of handing them over to army stores after each spell of duty.

This was a vital issue. The government's reaction would indisputably indicate to what extent Qassem was ready—or felt compelled—to entrust the maintenance of security to communist power and good will, beyond the exigencies of the moment.

The request was not heeded. On the contrary, strenuous efforts seem to have been made to withdraw the arms which had fallen into the hands of the PRF in the north during the Shawwāf revolt; in Baghdad the PRF patrols ceased as a rule to carry firearms, even when on duty, and were reduced to guarding the republic with staves¹⁰.

Yet it would be wrong to deduce that these incidents visibly betokened the waning of the PRF's power and prestige. Few observers noticed that the communist militia, as high-handed and feared as ever, was after all dependent on Qassem's magnanimity, which might be freely bestowed or withheld, and that Qassem himself was a shrewd judge of how far it was safe to go. The adversary is as strong as he is believed to be until he is put to the test. If the strength of the PRF was over-estimated, the error was more easily excusable since the organization achieved its widest territorial distribution at this time. By the beginning of April the PRF was installed in all the provinces of Iraq. However, it remained limited to towns of some size where supervision by the authorities was not too difficult.

WITHDRAWAL FROM THE BAGHDAD PACT

The two outstanding events in the foreign policy of Iraq during this period were the secession from the Baghdad Pact and the conclusion of the Soviet economic aid agreement.

On the evening of March 24 Qassem announced to cheering Iraqi journalists that Iraq had seceded from the Baghdad Pact. The decision was to take immediate effect, although the treaty was not due to expire until February 24, 1960—five years after its conclusion¹¹.

"To maintain our membership of the Baghdad Pact," Qassem explained,

¹⁰ *Mid. Mir.*, March 15, 22, 1959.

¹¹ *IT*, March 25, 1959.

"might help aggression and plots that could be exploited by the members of the pact to interfere in the internal affairs of the country on the pretext of restoring peace and order."

This rather forced argument was evidently meant to denote why the step had been taken just then. He approached more nearly the heart of the matter when he said that the "freezing of the Baghdad Pact during the past period [i.e., since the revolution] benefited us," and that "all these possibilities [of withdrawal, indefinite adherence or adherence until the date of expiration originally provided] were discussed quietly, wisely and deliberately in order not to give others any chance to accuse us." It was found, however, "that our membership in the Baghdad Pact was harming our dignity and national independence."

Qassem emphasized, "We will be friendly to any country which shows friendship to us." Apparently in an effort to demonstrate the normalcy of Iraqi relations with her former associates Qassem related how, during the Shawwāf revolt, the Turkish Ambassador in Baghdad had officially informed the government that Turkey considered the events a purely internal affair of Iraq. That this statement made nonsense of the case for withdrawal was one of the inconsistencies in logic to which Qassem was prone.

A brief note handed on the same day to the ambassadors of the Baghdad Pact countries, and transmitted verbally to the United States ambassador, stated that "this decision was in response to the principles of the revolution and to the will of the people, who on every occasion expressed their rejection of the pact." It also expressed the hope that the decision would "help the maintenance of friendly and cordial relations with the pact members."

Iraq's secession from the Baghdad Pact annulled the Special Agreement with Great Britain contracted on April 4, 1955. The Royal Air Force staging post at Habbaniya thereby lost its legal basis, as it had lost its strategic value with the revolution. On March 26 the British Embassy at Baghdad announced the impending withdrawal of the RAF contingent of some four hundred personnel, including eighty dependants. The withdrawal commenced on April 6 and was completed on May 31. For the first time since November 1914 there were no British troops present on Iraqi soil.

The day after Qassem's announcement, the Cabinet decided that henceforth March 24 would be celebrated as a national holiday, the "Festival of Freedom¹²."

¹² *IT*, March 27, 1959.

The withdrawal from the pact was less remarkable than the fact that it had been delayed so long. Iraq's membership had become a considerable embarrassment to the regime. It was an irritant to the Left and a providential way in which nationalists could combine the accusation that Qassem was at once a communist and a Western agent. The only persons it might please in Iraq were the "orphans of Nuri," as Maḥdāwī termed them, whose friendship counted for less than nothing. The reason for the delay given by Qassem was probably correct: since the pact had entirely lost its operative significance with the revolution, it would have to be discussed "wisely, quietly and deliberately" before Qassem took a purely demonstrative step that might be interpreted as hostile by countries which he did not wish to alienate.

The communists acclaimed the withdrawal from the pact as a major victory, with proclamations, processions, radio commentaries and public demonstrations. The UAR and her supporters outside Iraq did their best to show that the withdrawal was the result of underhand dealings between Qassem and imperialism, proved by the nonchalance with which the decision had been accepted in London. Their propaganda might also have drawn some encouragement for this view from the results of talks during April between the Iraqi government and the Iraq Petroleum Company; they established that relations between the regime and the representative of imperialism were sound, and that nationalization would not be considered in the near future¹³.

* * *

On March 16 an Iraqi economic delegation headed by Dr. Kubba signed a Technical and Economic Cooperation Agreement at Moscow, which was ratified by the Iraqi government on March 23¹⁴. According to the agreement, the Soviet Union was to lend Iraq 550 million roubles, at the official exchange rate, at 2½ per cent interest, repayable over twelve years. The loan was to be spent within seven years on industrial undertakings, on communications projects among which the standard gauge Baghdad-Basra railway was the most ambitious, and on agricultural amelioration; eighty Soviet technicians were to supervise and direct the work in the first stages.

¹³ See *IT*, April 27, 1959, for Dr. Kubba's statement on the conclusion of the talks; Iraq gained a number of concessions which did not, however, affect the basic relationship.

¹⁴ *WI*, No. 147, March 29, 1959.

When it was signed, the agreement made a deep impression. In a lengthy speech at the ceremony Khrushchev took pains to stress his support of Iraq in her dispute with the UAR and of her independence¹⁵. The sober, and on economic matters not generally sanguine, *al-Ahālī* stated that the "unconditional aid from the socialist countries had freed Iraq from its past dependence on the West in all fields of development," envisaging that it would "contribute greatly" to "Iraq's new foreign policy"¹⁶. Small wonder if the agreement appeared to Western chancelleries as an evil omen.

OPPOSING THE AGGRESSORS

The last "popular demand" urged on Qassem was to take punitive measures against countries "plotting aggression" against Iraq. If the intention was to provoke the worst possible relations with the UAR, subsequent developments left little to be desired. Relations between Iraq under Qassem and the UAR reached their nadir after the Shawwāf revolt, compared with which the feelings manifested in the preceding months appeared almost harmless.

However, there was a difference between the policies adopted by the two sides towards one another. The total hostility of the UAR towards the Iraqi regime was on the Iraqi side returned only by the communists and their most fervent allies, outstanding among whom were Maḥdāwī and Mājīd Amīn. The positions of Qassem and the general political sector were more complex.

The attitude evinced by the UAR at this stage cannot be rationalized as being merely a strategy to encompass the downfall of a regime from which it no longer had anything to expect. Its determinant was the quivering sensitivity which Abdel Nasser had registered before, and would register again, whenever he considered that his personal prestige was compromised by an adverse political development. The fact that for the first time a "liberated" Arab regime was the opposition added fuel to the flames. Reprisal by swift, dramatic action was out of reach, as Abdel Nasser knew; there was no Suez canal to be nationalized, and war with Iraq was impossible. The hate campaign now unleashed owed much to a raging desire to hit out at a despised adversary who should have been overthrown, and instead was snugly entrenched.

The first move was significant: on March 9, when to the outside world at least the mutiny was still ablaze, Mājīd Amīn had sarcastically condoled

¹⁵ *Izvestiya—Mizan*, No. 4, April 1959, App., pp. 1–6.

¹⁶ *Ahālī—R. Baghdad*, March 18 [20], 1959.

with "Pharaoh"—Abdel Nasser—upon the "destruction of his dream"¹⁷. He also referred to a *troika* "Gamāl-'Aflaq-Ḥawrānī"—thus equating the UAR president with the Damascus Ba'ṭh leaders, possibly a deadlier insult than the unsubtle Amīn realized. When two days later Abdel Nasser blazed forth to his people with a series of phillipics against Iraq extending for over a week, he singled out with especial spite the attacks made "on your President" in "Qassem's court of abuse."

Qassem was attacked in person as *Qāsim al-'Irāq*, "the divider of Iraq," an obvious pun which was quickly taken up by the UAR press and supporters. Out of spite, envy, weakness and lack of principle Qassem had betrayed Arab nationalism to imperialism and to the communists, the ingrates who had repayed the asylum afforded them from Nuri's oppression with the intention of undermining the UAR. Lately Qassem had added deliberate murder to his offences. It was an outrageous lie that the UAR had instigated the Shawwāf revolt or earlier convulsions. These had been the healthy reaction of Arab nationalism to the destruction wrought, or threatened, by Qassem and the communists. The standard-bearer of Arab nationalism—relentless, uncompromising and not refraining from any sacrifice—was the United Arab Republic, of course.

The radio and press took up the cry, each editor and commentator in his characteristic vein; some, like Haykal of *al-Ahrām* with a ponderous air of responsibility, others with vulgarity ranging to obscenity.

The populace was fully mobilized for the hate campaign. The demonstrations in the Syrian cities were more impressive than those in Egypt—partly due to differences in temperament and partly because the specific challenge to Abdel Nasser's supremacy in the north, which Qassem's regime was believed to represent, required greater exertions of organization and incitement.

The campaign was not confined to internal consumption. Eight months after Abdel Nasser's blessings had accompanied its closure, "Free Iraq" was resuscitated on the air, but in a dual equivalent. On April 5 the "Voice of Iraq" appeared, followed on April 22 by the "Radio of the Free Iraqi Republic." Both stations championed Arab nationalism and attacked Qassem and the communists; both claimed to be situated inside Iraq but were probably located in Syria.

One of the less predictable charges brought against Qassem and his supporters purported to give an explanation of the communists' hatred of Arab *qawmiyya*. They "did not have a single drop of Arab blood in

¹⁷ R. Baghdad, March 9 [11], 1959.

their veins" and were either Kurds or Turcomans, Jews or Iranians¹⁸. The contention that the communists were not real Arabs, which appeared in several Egyptian papers at the same time—around the last week in March—and was then simultaneously dropped, must have been centrally inspired. It certainly reduced the charge of *shu'ūbiyya* to earthbound terms, and pointed references were made in return by the Iraqi press to "fascist-racist" propaganda.

The point of view adopted in Iraq for propaganda purposes was that "the UAR had organized the Mosul Plot¹⁹." This explanation was also propounded in various ways: the communist and para-communist press, as well as Baghdad Radio commentaries, competed with the UAR in vituperation. Maḥdāwī and Amīn outbid each other in the coarseness of epithets applied to Abdel Nasser, whose person, it should be remembered, until then had been spared. Nasser's sobriquet to correspond with *Qāsim al-'Irāq* was *Nāṣir al-Isti'mār*, "the Champion of Imperialism." Chief among the more rational accusations was that he had been responsible for the rape of Syrian democracy and, in consequence, the United Arab Republic was to be deemed illegitimate.

The city mobs in Baghdad, Mosul and Basra were as possessed with hatred as their equivalents in Damascus, Aleppo and Cairo, and the slogan-shouting, banner-waving and effigy-burning processions in Iraq matched the excesses in the UAR.

Regarding non-communist opinion, the Right had no voice in the quarrel between Iraq and the UAR²⁰. But the National Democrats were able to join issue, and their organ *al-Aḥālī* maintained a dignified stand. The present unfortunate dispute between the two governments—not between the people, as the newspaper stated repeatedly—was the outcome of Abdel Nasser's disappointment at his failure to annex Iraq. Abdel Nasser's merits in the struggle against imperialism were indisputable. But Iraq had

¹⁸ *Akhbār-al-Yawm*—*MENA*, March 21 [23], 1959; *Ahrām*, March 24, 1959.

¹⁹ Headline in *IT*, March 18, 1959, attributed to Ḥāshim Jawād, the Foreign Minister.

²⁰ The nearest to nationalist opinion published was a radio interview with Dr. Jūmurḍ, the former Minister of Foreign Affairs whom Cairo had reported as murdered in Mosul. In the interview Jūmurḍ, besides stating that he was alive, said: "There are no words in my dictionary which can describe the Mosul murders—the foolishness and rashness of those who participated in them, and the criminal nature of those who caused them" (*R. Baghdad*, March 31 [April 2], 1959). The censor who assuredly vetted the tape does not seem to have noticed that this condemnation was applicable to either side.

a deep-seated predilection for democracy; she did not dictate to others, and would not be dictated to herself.

Qassem himself maintained a calm that was almost olympian; what may have been a psychological twist prevented him from ever mentioning Abdel Nasser, even when directly challenged. He employed no abuse; he did not complain; he pitied, he forgave, perhaps he despised; and he went his own way. No doubt genuine self-confidence was combined with dissimulation and escapism; in what proportion cannot be determined.

The tenor of his public utterances may be judged in the following extracts from an interview granted to William McHale, correspondent of *Time* magazine²¹:

McHale: "... what do you believe were the reasons that stimulated Abdel Nasser to direct his attacks against the republic and its leaders?"

Qassem: "I personally did not attack anyone. They perhaps know the reasons for such open attacks on Iraq."

McHale: "Is it possible for Iraq to maintain friendly relations with the UAR, despite the presence of Abdel Nasser at the head of the government?"

Qassem: "Both the Egyptian and the Syrian peoples [!] are our brothers. We will never abandon them. Every aggressor will return to his senses because we have nothing against him. Our relations will inevitably be good with all countries which have no hostile intentions towards us ..."

McHale: "... Does Your Excellency expect to meet Abdel Nasser to settle affairs?"

Qassem: "... We ... started to build up a society better than the one the results of whose actions you see ... Whether or not the meeting which you mean takes place, we will continue the work ..."

McHale: "Do you believe there is a major danger threatening the country?"

Qassem: "There was a danger threatening the country during the first six months of the revolution, but after that and at present there is none. This is because the people have united and are determined to defend ... the republic and the gains of the revolution to the last drop of their blood²²."

²¹ *IT*, March 23, 1959. McHale was expelled from Iraq on March 26. The reason apparently was his account of the post-Mosul horrors which appeared in *Time*, March 23, 1959.

²² This reply is somewhat baffling and was probably meant to be so. At first glance

On the Shawwāf revolt:

Qassem: "... the recent movement in Mosul was arranged from outside in addition to unjust press campaigns against Iraq which aimed to mislead simpletons..."

McHale: "Does Iraq... intend to lead the Arab states?"

Qassem: "We do not want to lead anyone... We will cooperate with these peoples on the basis of full sovereignty. Every people has the absolute freedom to establish the government it wants... The time has gone when individuals impose their government upon the people."

At intervals, especially during the week after the revolt, the UAR accused Iraq of frontier violations along the northern sector of the common boundary; occasionally Iraq countered with similar claims. Abdel Nasser made it clear, however, that whatever the provocation, military retaliation entailing the shedding by Arabs of Arab blood would not be contemplated. Qassem, seemingly in a less generous mood, announced that the Iraqi army was prepared to deal with all comers. There can be no doubt that Iraqi forces, including aircraft, were guilty of crossing the frontier on occasion, in the wake of the Shammar's westward flight and perhaps in order to impress the frontier population.

On the whole, if the verbal hostilities are reviewed, the UAR protagonists appear to have done better at the mud-slinging level as well as in more ingenious methods of abuse. The slogans employed by Abdel Nasser and the nationalists were more telling than those invented by Maḥdāwī and the communists, even for home consumption: *Qāsim al-'Irāq* had a point; *Nāṣir al-Isti'mār* was meaningless. Qassem showed a sounder insight when he adjured his supporters to disregard insults and proceed with the business of the day, in consolidating the victory gained.

Towards the end of April the polemics subsided a little, probably because the hysteria of the previous month could not be maintained indefinitely without the addition of fresh fuel; but no positive steps towards reconciliation were taken.

* * *

More practical relations between the two countries also deteriorated, but stopped short of a total break.

On March 9 the UAR Embassy in Baghdad received notices of expulsion

the reference seems to allude to Western "imperialism," the danger of British or American invasion, or the like. But the time-bracket of six months makes it logical that Qassem had in mind the "Unity now" movement.

within twenty-four hours for nine of its members, including Cols. 'Abd al-Majīd Farīd and Tal'at Šidqī—the military attaché and his assistant. Providentially, Sayyid Fahmī, the UAR ambassador to Baghdad, had been absent in Cairo since March 4 for a week's leave²³. Mu'ayyid al-'Azm, chargé d'affaires since the ambassador's departure, remained behind²⁴. Simultaneously the Baghdad office of the UAR *Middle East News Agency* was closed down on 'Abdī's orders; the same reason, subversion, was given in both cases.

The corresponding upheaval at the Iraqi Embassy in Cairo was of an embarrassingly different character, from the Iraqi point of view. When on the afternoon of March 26 Fā'iq al-Sāmarrā'ī, the Iraqi ambassador, walked out of his office, he walked out on his government. The same afternoon Cairo Radio broadcasted the news of his resignation. Next day the same source, and subsequently the UAR press, published his lengthy letter of resignation in full²⁵. The gist of it was that Sāmarrā'ī, when accepting the office, had intended to represent "a government that respects itself," not "a Red gang."

Sāmarrā'ī's defection was followed by that of other Iraqi diplomats in Cairo, prominent among them Muḥammad Adīb Sulaymān, who had been left as chargé d'affaires after Sāmarrā'ī's withdrawal.

Curiously, the UAR continued the post-revolutionary arrangement of representing Iraq in countries where she had no diplomatic missions of her own. The Iraqi Foreign Ministry relieved the UAR of this task at last at the end of 1959²⁶.

* * *

A further effect at the political level of the Shawwāf revolt and the state of Iraqi-UAR relations was that Iraq once more ceased to be active in the Arab League and was not represented at the meetings of the political committee at Beirut, which opened on April 2. The reasons given by official sources at Baghdad were that the Arab League Secretariat, which was UAR dominated, had shown discourtesy to Iraq when the conference was arranged. Qassem was more precise when he said, "We were the people on whom aggression was committed . . . The wound from which the blood

²³ *MENA*, March 4 [6], 1959.

²⁴ 'Azm, a Syrian, represented the UAR at Baghdad until the secession of Syria. He then represented Syria for a time.

²⁵ *Ahrām*, March 28, 1959.

²⁶ *R. Baghdad*, Dec. 24 [29], 1959.

of innocent people was dripping has not yet healed. For that reason we did not want to participate with the [aggressive] group simply to go through protracted debates²⁷. . .” In the result, Iraq lost nothing by her default. Although the states which were hostile to Abdel Nasser at the time—Jordan, Tunisia and Libya—were also absent, no clearcut resolution condemning Iraq was passed, despite the efforts of the UAR delegation.

* * *

In the field of cultural and technical cooperation, however, the collapse was complete.

Of about five hundred UAR teachers and seven hundred experts and technicians in other fields who had been encouraged to come to Iraq, a small number was expelled for undesirable activities within a fortnight of the revolt. Attempts were made by the Iraqi authorities to ensure courteous treatment for the remainder, although some evidently endured unpleasantness, particularly teachers at the hands of communist students. Towards the end of March the UAR Minister of Education warned the Iraqi government that unless “the safety of UAR teachers was ensured” they would have to return at once²⁸. At the beginning of April the threat was carried out; at first the teachers and, after a few days, the other experts were instructed to resign—in most cases in breach of contract—and return home immediately.

This was a blow to Iraq’s impoverished educational and technical resources but, apart from the impossibility of constraining the strangers against their own and their government’s wishes, the political situation made their departure imperative. By April 11 all UAR nationals, excepting a few physicians, had returned home. The problem of replacement was difficult, and teaching staffs were often augmented by non-professional volunteers and senior students.

There were no Iraqi experts in the UAR, but Iraqi students were attending Cairo university. The Shawwāf revolt put an excessive strain on the young people’s national solidarity. On March 11 a quarrel broke out at the Iraqi Students Club in Cairo between the supporters and opponents of Qassem; blows were exchanged and bones broken. The police entered in the course of the fight and arrests were made. Some students took refuge, or attempted

²⁷ *Press Interview Granted by Major-General ‘Abd al-Karīm Qassem to Mr. R. Karanjia* (booklet printed under official auspices by Times Press, Baghdad, 1959).

²⁸ *Mid. Mir.*, March 29, 1959.

to take refuge, in the Iraqi Embassy. The upshot was that some 30 of 120 students returned home in protest against the "barbarous assault" committed by "Abdel Nasser's gangs"; the remainder stayed in Cairo, apparently with the consent of the Iraqi authorities.

Since the revolution Iraqi-UAR cooperation had achieved its highest expression in the Covenant for Arab Cultural Unity, signed at Baghdad on October 28, 1958. The provisions of the agreement had been unrealistic from the first, and the deteriorating relations between the two countries had made it an anachronism for months. Now, with the situation irretrievable, Qassem saw that the agreement was ceremoniously ratified by law, on March 24, 1959²⁹. In the circumstances such a step, which could have no practical value, can only be interpreted as a demonstration of Iraqi goodwill in the face of UAR malice; its seeming artlessness is typical of Qassem's actions.

At the beginning of April the cinema control committee banned the import of Egyptian motion pictures into Iraq, as they were "mere trifles"³⁰. The ban remained in force until Qassem's downfall. The decision was probably unwise. Egypt was practically the sole producer of feature films in the Arab world; the ban, by depriving large numbers of people of their chief entertainment, brought home the quarrel as little else could have done, in a manner highly prejudicial to the popularity of the Iraqi regime.

²⁹ *WI*, No. 145, March 24, 1959, p. 7.

³⁰ *R. Baghdad*, April 9 [11], 1959.

CHAPTER 15 THE HIGH TIDE OF COMMUNISM: THE "NATIONAL" PARTIES AND ORGANIZATIONS

THE ICP AND ITS DEPENDENT ORGANIZATIONS

The ICP abandoned the slogan of "Federation" with the UAR without further ceremony. The ICP secretary himself was quoted in *Ittihad al-Sha'b* as saying that the UAR conspiracies against "liberated Iraq" had "undermined the possibilities for closer relations at present." The first requirement was "the struggle by the people of the UAR against their rulers in both Egypt and Syria. When they succeed in their struggle, it will be possible to take concrete steps to reinforce the relations between the peoples of the two republics¹. . ."

The "National Organizations" continued to develop vigorously, although mostly without formal sanction. On the whole Qassem was liberal in the latitude he permitted to the political and para-political bodies—even to those which were strictly speaking illegal. But it was never safe to count on his tolerance, particularly if he thought himself slighted.

The Peace Partisans of Iraq held their second general congress at Baghdad on April 14–17, 1959². After the bloodbath at Mosul it had the atmosphere of a victory celebration. There were nearly a thousand delegates including guests from Arab and communist countries, the former mostly representing underground organizations. It culminated in a monster procession of reputedly a million participants. 'Aziz Sharif was re-elected chairman and Tawfiq Munir vice-chairman of the Peace Partisans; a galaxy of leftist intellectuals formed the council³. The most important political event of the congress was Qassem's opening address, which is treated below (see pp. 204–5).

The licensing of the communist-dominated trade unions which had begun in February continued rapidly in all parts of the country.

The organization of the peasantry also achieved a decisive advance,

¹ 'Adil, Salām, *Siyāsāt al-ḥizb al-shuyū'ī al-'irāqī*, Baghdad, 1959, pp. 21–3.

² The first congress had been held clandestinely in July 1954.

³ The full membership list of the ninety-strong council appears in *IT*, April 19, 1959.

after the obstacles put in its path by the government in previous months. On April 15, 1959, "the first peasants conference in Iraq's history" was held in Baghdad and addressed by Qassem⁴. In practice this was the founding congress of the Federation of Peasants Societies, but since no law formalizing the societies or a superstructure had yet been passed, discretion demanded the more modest reference. Its chairman Kāzim Farḥūd, who later headed the constituent committee of the federation, saw to it that the conference was purely communist managed.

The Journalists Association was to remain one of the most vigorous of communist-led organizations for another two years. As stated previously, it first became active during this period in calling for the suppression of the Shawwāf conspirators, anticipating its formal constitution. In face of the need for a powerful and coordinated instrument to counteract Cairo propaganda the government did not stick at legal niceties and permitted its meetings.

On the other hand, the Federation of Democratic Youth finally obtained its licence on March 29⁵. A sign of the approbation which this front organization enjoyed in official circles was a call by Akram Fahmī, Director-General of Physical Education, urging all youth sports clubs to join the federation⁶. Fahmī, a former football ace, had remained in his post throughout all the upheavals since World War II, when he had been one of the chief champions of Nazi Germany in Iraq.

The Liaison Committee for the national organizations was now for the first time given prominence. This was typical of the blurred situation, in which the ICP found itself almost, but not entirely, above ground. The publicized activities of the committee were mainly ceremonial: it welcomed a delegation from Mosul; it issued congratulations and protests, and compiled manifestos. It managed to convey the impression that it was acting as a coordinated body with authority, a government behind the government. The advocate Ṣāliḥ al-Shālchī appeared as spokesman of the committee since its chairman Ṣādiq al-Falāḥī headed the nascent Federation of Trade Unions and could not suitably represent organizations that were ostensibly non-worker.

THE KURDS

Kurdish nationalism in Iraq still remained in harmonious relations with both the government and the ascendant communist movement.

⁴ *IT*, April 16, 1959.

⁵ *R. Baghdad*, March 30 [April 1], 1959.

⁶ *R. Baghdad*, May 17 [19], 1959.

The violent part that the Kurdish tribesmen had taken in the suppression of the Shawwāf revolt, encouraged by Barzani, has been mentioned.

On April 4 the UDPK started to publish its party organ in Baghdad, the daily *Kha-bat* ("Struggle")⁷. The first issue announced its policy, identical with that of the party. The main points were that the UDPK opposed imperialism, reaction and feudalism; it would fight for democracy, Iraqi independence, peace and the national freedom of the Kurdish people, at present suppressed in Turkey, Iran and Syria.

Kha-bat stood entirely behind the 14th July Revolution and its leader Qassem.

Its policy was "socialist-orientated"; it would guard against world imperialism directed by the United States and strive for cooperation and friendship between the youth of Iraq and of the socialist countries, in the first place the Soviet Union and the Chinese People's Republic. "*Kha-bat* will fight the common enemy, shoulder to shoulder with the United National Front, the cream of our party's youth and that of the Communist Party."

In regard to Kurdish problems, its policy would seek "to adjust the legitimate aspirations of the Kurdish nation to those of the Iraqi Republic" in a brotherly bond, which would unite Kurds and Arabs; one of these aspirations was the restoration to the Kurdish nation of its administrative and cultural rights.

Finally it was stated that *Kha-bat* did not intend to confine its interest to Iraqi territory; it would "carry the light to the other parts of Kurdistan under the reactionary dominion of Turkey and Iran, and under the dictatorship of Abdel Nasser"⁸.

Therodomontade of the last paragraph makes unexpected reading: it was impracticable, and out of line with the strategy and tactics of the UDPK in Iraq; it certainly would not recommend itself to Qassem and can have been inspired only by the Kurdish jubilation at the new sense of freedom and identification with the government.

Progress was also made in achieving "Kurdish cultural rights." At the beginning of April the Ministry of Education proposed the establishment of a Director-General for Kurdish Studies within the ministry. The UDPK had requested that the new body should be responsible directly to Qassem, but this Qassem refused. However, the department was duly established and Dr. Jamāl al-Ḥājī Shafīq, a native of Sulaimaniya, was appointed its head. Its sphere was defined, rather cautiously, as the supervision of

⁷ Before the revolution *Kha-bat* had been published clandestinely.

⁸ Quoted according to *Orient*, 2^e trimestre, 1959, pp. 155-7.

“technical and administrative aspects of Kurdish education, the appointment of teachers and the selection of textbooks⁹.”

* * *

The Covenant of Cooperation between the ICP and the UDPK, ratified at the highest level in the preceding November, did not in itself solve the differences between both parties in Kurdistan. In order to effect the settlement and, presumably, to make the best possible arrangements for each side on the spot, a joint commission was sent north at the beginning of April¹⁰. Its composition was fully representative and included an Arab and a Kurdish communist: ‘Azīz Sharīf, the chairman of the Iraqi Peace Partisans, and Jamāl al-Ḥaydarī, a member of the political bureau. In addition were Shaykh Ṣādiq Barzani, nephew of Mullā Muṣṭafā, and Hamza ‘Abdallah and ‘Umar Muṣṭafā, both members of the UDPK central committee; the former belonged to the extreme left wing of the party, the latter was to become a military leader in the Kurdish rising of 1961–62.

The coexistence and, in many cases, cooperation, of both parties continued. The absorption of the Federation of Democratic Youth of Iraqi Kurdistan into the general Iraqi Federation of Democratic Youth was announced on May 10 “after three days of friendly negotiations.” The Kurdish organization’s members were to enter the Democratic Youth as individuals, although they would have an equal share on the committees preparing elections to the bodies of the federation in the Kurdish area¹¹. How real were the gains which the ICP would have won by this concession is difficult to determine. In later years UDPK leaders argued that the preponderance of their party members in the Kurdish towns—which was taken for granted—would have ensured their influence inside the enlarged organization as well. The communists undoubtedly trusted that the national character of the Democratic Youth as a front organization would act as an assimilator. However, the emasculation of all front organizations which soon followed did not allow the matter to come to a test.

* * *

A further cause for Kurdish satisfaction was the return of some 850 Kurds who had fled from Iraq after the 1945–47 insurrection and found refuge in the Soviet Union. They arrived in Basra on April 16 on board a Soviet

⁹ *R. Baghdad*, April 4 [6], 7 [9], 1959.

¹⁰ *NCNA*, April 4 [6], 1959.

¹¹ *R. Baghdad*, May 10 [12], 1959.

ship and were despatched at once to Baghdad and the north. The government allocated considerable sums for their resettlement¹².

While the constellation of Qassem, Barzani and the UDPK enhanced its reputation among the urban Kurds by this instance of cooperation, the uneasy quietude in the Kurdish mountain fastnesses since the new year was again disturbed by the apparent strength of the Barzanis and the advance of communism. The unsophisticated tribesmen regarded both phenomena as facets of a single government plot against their liberties. The migration furnished UAR propaganda with an opportunity to circulate alarmist reports that "Soviet Kurds, fully armed, . . . trained in guerilla fighting" were on their way to join Qassem and his communist allies¹³.

Towards the end of April the Lolan, under their chief Muḥammad Rashīd Agha, domiciled north-east of Ruwandiz, attacked and occupied the small police posts at the villages of Nabah and Kani Rahsh. The government sent aircraft to strafe the concentrations of the tribe, it is said with considerable loss of life. This brutal measure was standard procedure in such insurrections—suggested, if not excused, by the difficulties of the terrain. The Lolan fled across the nearby frontier into Turkey.

A week later similar disturbances broke out further south, in and about the Pishdar area close to the Iranian frontier; the central figure in this affair was 'Abbās Māmānd Agha, who was to play a role in the 1961 outbreak. Here the challenge was dealt with by ground forces—a medley of regulars, PRF contingents and Barzanis. The PRF distinguished itself by the unruliness of its members, and especially by their refusal to obey army orders. It was soon withdrawn from the area of operations.

These two small-scale campaigns induced other chiefs to cross the frontiers from Iraq to Turkey and Iran with thousands of their followers¹⁴. In about mid-May the situation calmed down with the submission of those rebels who had not fled abroad. To those who had, Qassem issued a proclamation of amnesty on June 25. It assured "certain villagers and tribesmen in the mountainous area of our beloved homeland [who have] taken part in the recent local disputes and carried out certain unlawful acts" that they would be granted full pardon if they returned "to their normal work . . . on the good earth of Iraq" before the end of July. The term "Kurds" did not appear throughout¹⁵. The offer was accepted by the majority of the refugees.

¹² *IT*, April 1, 18, 19, 24, 1959.

¹³ *R. Cairo*, April 9, 1959.

¹⁴ For a list of the tribes affected, see Arfa, H., *The Kurds*, London, 1965, p. 133.

¹⁵ *R. Baghdad*, June 25 [27], 1959.

An illuminating byproduct of the disturbances was the publicity given in May and June 1959 to various government measures providing for Barzani peasants. By employing them with the Ministry of Agriculture or the agrarian reform administration, or by aiding them to reclaim wastelands for cultivation, the government found a way to absorb them that demonstrably did not trespass on the preserves of their neighbours.

THE NDP

The National Democratic Party exerted little influence during this period. Of its top-ranking members Ḥadīd, Ḥmūd and Dr. Ḥasan Zakariyā—director-general at the Foreign Ministry—engrossed themselves in their departmental duties; Ḥusayn Jamīl after his short spell in the Cabinet was virtually in self-imposed exile, first in India and afterwards as ambassador to Iran. Most significant, Chaderchi was seriously ill, and soon to leave for prolonged medical treatment in Moscow. The members of the second rank mainly leaned far to the Left and had little to say except when prompted by the ICP—and in the encouraging atmosphere of March and April 1959 the ICP saw little need to bolster fellow-travelling allies.

Al-Aḥālī, the party organ, remained true to its line of general conformity with the communist position, occasionally saving its soul with a ponderous criticism limited to the specific instance. In a notable article which made a strong impact it confessed to a belief in “guided democracy” at the present time, in order “to prevent reactionary, feudalist and imperialist elements from benefiting by democratic liberties¹⁶.” Considering the background and tradition of the NDP, this assertion was an act of apostasy which it is difficult to excuse by tactical or political exigencies.

The honour and independence of the NDP at this time were saved by its rank and file who clashed with the communists in a number of provincial centres over the latter’s attempts to monopolize the leadership of the trade unions and other “national organizations.” Although the communists later castigated their own arrogance as “a serious mistake—one of the most serious ever”¹⁷—this was hindsight.

The NDP leadership showed itself eager to smooth out differences. During the last days of April a joint committee was formed by the NDP and the ICP “to promote good understanding . . . and study certain political problems . . . in the spirit of the revolution.” Especially prominent on the NDP side of this committee were Ḥmūd and Dr. ‘Abdallāh Ismā‘īl al-Bustānī, while Ḥadīd stayed aloof.

¹⁶ *Aḥālī*, April 2, 1959.

¹⁷ Private information.

Obviously the efforts that would be required to achieve the impending communist demand for inclusion in the Cabinet convinced the ICP leadership that the NDP must again be courted. Relations within the committee seem to have been cordial at first, and the ICP had good reason to count on full NDP support for all its political claims. The dashing of these hopes belongs to the following stage in the political history of Qassem's Iraq.

OMENS OF TROUBLE

The leaders of the ICP themselves shared in the general appreciation of the party's strength. Above all, they evinced no perception that the party had so far never had to contend with determined opposition from Qassem on any important issue, nor any foreboding that in such a contest the party might encounter a check: opposition from Qassem was not even expected.

A resolution of the ICP central committee dating from April 1959 shows that the party was encountering the same difficulties and suffering from the same shortcomings as those to be mentioned in the central committee report of July 1959¹⁸. But the earlier resolution presented them as a challenge to be met proudly, as an incentive to make a final effort, not as an alibi for retreat. The April resolution indicated that the tide was favourable to communism: "The branches have grown enormously, but compared with the political influence and prestige enjoyed by the party their numerical strength is not very great, and does not correspond to the sweeping revolutionary upsurge in the country." An interesting collateral is the gratitude expressed to "a small number of comrades . . . who cannot enjoy their rights as party members . . . because they are isolated from their organizations for reasons which do not depend on them . . . The party declares that it is proud of these comrades . . ." Apparently the allusion was to prominent members of front organizations, like 'Aziz Sharif of the Peace Partisans, who had to maintain their camouflage as non-party members, however flimsy, out of tactical considerations. They may have expressed concern that they might slip from the party bandwagon.

Statements of the ICP secretary dating from the same time breathe the identical spirit of approaching victory, to an extent which would have endangered their commission to paper. At a central committee meeting in mid-April—probably when the above-mentioned resolution was taken—Salām 'Ādil talked in glowing terms of his certainty that the ICP was on the straight road to power; the situation was especially satisfactory in

¹⁸ The resolution appears under the title "For Better Inner-Party Work," in *WMR*, May 1959, pp. 66–8.

the army, where the soldiers had learned "to put revolutionary law before military law¹⁹."

* * *

A new cause of growing communist dissatisfaction towards the end of the period was with the manner in which the Agrarian Reform Law was being implemented²⁰. From the outset the ICP had considered that the land-owners were treated over-leniently by the law. Ideally, their lands should have been totally expropriated at once and without compensation, although it was conceded that this extreme course was impracticable. But as the months passed, and the *modus operandi* of the law became discernible, the party considered that even its moderate provisions were far from being utilized; landlords proved shifty when they did not actually sabotage the law; the wishes and proffered cooperation of "the peasants," or the peasants' communist representatives, were disregarded; worst of all, the officials of the agrarian reform administration were sluggish if not uncooperative. A breakthrough had been achieved with the government's countenancing the peasants conference, but in practice none of the peasants societies had as yet been licensed.

The divergency of outlook between Qassem and the communists to which these limited issues point could also be detected in the general tenor of Qassem's addresses, especially before communist-led audiences. His call for caution and tolerance was not new, but was now repeated frequently and insistently. Qassem even found metaphors of originality and aptness to drive the moral home: "When the rains fall heavily, most of the water does not benefit the land . . . when it falls lightly, it penetrates deep²¹ . . ."

The motifs of brotherhood, forgiveness, and cooperation for the common

¹⁹ Private information. Salām 'Ādil's assertion was gruesomely borne out by an incident at Basra. On April 21 about fifty soldiers dragged their commanding officer, Col. Jalāl Aḥmad Ismā'īl, to his death; he had ordered them to open fire on their comrades who were demonstrating before his office. The matter was hushed up at the time.

²⁰ Authoritative on this theme from the communist viewpoint is a series of articles by Zakī Khayrī (*Ittiḥād al-Sha'b*, with an adequate condensation in *WMR*, April 1959, pp. 55-60). A full translation, extended and brought up to date, appeared in *Iraqi Review*, I, Nos. 28 and 29, and II, Nos. 1-5. If the communist premises are allowed, the treatise is of a high standard. A valuable monograph on the subject is Gabbay, "Communism and Agrarian Reform in Iraq".

²¹ *Zamān*, April 6, 1959.

weal occurred with equal force and in plain language: "This peasant, who suffered a lot in the past from the exploitation of his brother, will find it very hard to see the big feudalist and the big cultivator still maintaining some rights . . . [But] the interest of the individual merges in the interest of all. Therefore I recommend you to bury the old rancour and feuds and to come together . . . to uphold tolerance and cooperation so that we can successfully arrive at satisfactory solutions for every citizen²²."

Qassem found no response. The discrepancy could be noticed dramatically when Qassem and communist spokesmen appeared together. Thus at the peasants conference Qassem's call for forgiveness and coexistence was promptly answered with resolutions calling for hangings and the "extirpation of feudalism." The explicit disregard for Qassem's wishes augured ill for the continuation of the Qassem-ICP team²³.

²² *IT*, April 16, 1959.

²³ Iraqi communists have since been eloquent in abusing Qassem's "turgid romanticism" which, they asserted, so far as it had any rational content at all, cloaked the cunning of an entirely unprincipled egoist. On the other hand, the folly of having shown so little deference to Qassem's watchwords constitutes a considerable part of the self-criticism in the *CC Report*.

CHAPTER 16 THE APPROACHING CRISIS

The struggle for supremacy between Qassem and the communists until early August, when the issue was decided, must not be viewed in an over-polarized light. The communists never veered from their declared support of the Leader, although they expressed it with significant variations. Qassem, for his part, passed a number of measures which testify to continued friendliness towards the communists, with certain provisos.

The period is decisive because at its outset it marked the parting of the ways for the first time since the revolution: the ICP was *prima facie* challenging Qassem's position, however circumspectly the case was presented.

The ICP had not yet considered it opportune to raise in its own name two issues the settlement of which was to prove a turning point in the history of Iraq under Qassem. These were the right of political parties to function legally and of communist representation in the government. The demands the communists advanced immediately after the Shawwāf revolt were all ostensibly of a defensive nature: although their fulfilment would immeasurably strengthen communist influence, they did not touch the visible power structure of the regime. However, as the ICP seemed to increase in strength, feelers were extended in that direction also through the medium of dependent or friendly newspapers. At the end of March the Director-General of Guidance and Broadcasting said that he believed Qassem to be favourably considering the licensing of political parties¹. Thereupon the suggestion that the time had come to take this step found place in one newspaper after another throughout April.

On April 15 Qassem himself mentioned the issue in his address to the Peace Partisans congress in Baghdad. He did not reject it outright but explained that "whatever the party membership—maybe it will cover one million [*sic*] or half a million members—it is still the minority compared with the whole population. We are working for a noble idea which is

¹ *Zamān*, March 30, 1959.

above trends and political parties². . .” Apparently in compensation, he told his “brothers, the workers” on the same occasion that this year they would “be able to join . . . their brethren all over the world in celebrating May Day—the workers’ day.” In due course the government proclaimed that the First of May would henceforth be a public holiday under the name of Labour Day.

Communist participation in the Cabinet had even seemingly been suggested from above. On April 4 Qassem announced that “we shall have a tremendous revolution in the state machinery this month³.” This proved to be a plan for the reorganization of the government by abolishing two ministries and setting up seven in their place, but it was believed at the time that the purpose was to make room—and create an unobtrusive pretext—for the admission of communist ministers⁴.

The published reaction was cautious at first, although there was activity behind the scenes. The leftist *al-Thawra* in a remarkable article said that “the people cannot concede superiority to any trend . . . at the expense of another party trend which might be more representative” and that “no one party . . . can evolve the national rule single-handed.” These hints were not aimed at the communists, as might be conjectured at first glance, but against the monopoly of Cabinet seats since February by the NDP⁵. When in the last days of April the press came out full blast for communist participation in the Cabinet, their call was the direct prelude to the official ICP demand.

* * *

On April 28 *Ittihad al-Sha'b* and *Ṣawt al-Ahrār*, the official and the unofficial mouthpieces of the ICP, voiced the demand for communist participation in the Cabinet with unprecedented urgency. The reasons given virtually amounted to a bill for past services; ever since the revolution “the popular masses” had surged ahead, whereas “reactionary elements” had endeavoured to retard the pace by intrigue and treason. The ICP, through its “vast popularity,” had been an “effective factor” in overcoming these elements; in consequence this was the party bearing “the greatest responsibilities on the popular level.” Ministers were still appointed arbitrarily, instead of being chosen by the people “through their experienced parties.”

² *IT*, April 16, 1959.

³ *IT*, April 6, 1959.

⁴ *Mid. Mir.*, April 12, 1959.

⁵ *Thawra—IT*, April 24, 1959.

The newspapers argued that "patriotic parties" were represented in the Cabinet; only the communists were not.

The following day the ICP central committee endorsed the proposal in its First-of-May statement, "not . . . out of any wish to procure political profits. . . but to safeguard and reinforce the republic⁶." The same statement pronounced the need for "rebuilding the democratic National Front on the largest organizational scale to ensure representation of all the democratic national parties and mass popular organizations." The "democratic national parties" besides the ICP were evidently the NDP and the UDPK, to whom the ICP sent its "warm greetings."

The complaint that parties other than the ICP had been represented in the government since the revolution, well founded as it seems at first sight, needs qualification. Indeed it was common knowledge to what connection Ḥadīd, Ḥmūd and Jamīl, Shanshal and Rikābī, had owed their seats. They had not been selected arbitrarily, as *Ittīḥād al-Sha'b* claimed inconsistently in that same article. But they represented their respective parties on a strictly unofficial basis; Qassem had never conceded that they ranked other than as individuals, "faithful sons of the people," enjoying his trust. The communists, on the other hand, made it clear that they wanted their representatives to sit on the Cabinet *qua* communists, as the publicly accredited emissaries of the ICP. Hence the importance of the issue implied by the call for the "legalization of the parties."

It was a portent that the central committee statement in its entire length of some six newspaper columns, bearing the signature of "the central committee of the Iraqi Communist Party," should appear throughout the national press: the Iraqi Communist Party had decided to take its stand in the floodlight of publicity. Even more significantly, the statement showed that the line had been crossed between attempting to influence the fate of Iraq from below and directing it from above. This, judging from developments, was the view which Qassem took, and he demurred. The communists had pushed the Sole Leader slogan with a vengeance.

* * *

Neither side directly concerned has ever revealed what seats the ICP demanded at this juncture or who was to occupy them. However, according to a credible rumour, 'Abd al-Qādir Ismā'īl al-Bustānī, the party's usual emissary to Qassem, asked for the portfolios of the Interior, Foreign Affairs and the projected Ministry of Agrarian Reform; the names men-

⁶ *Zamān, IT*, April 30, 1959.



Paul Popper

Mahdāwī

محكمة الشعب



"The People's Court"

Cover design of the *Proceedings of the Special Supreme Military Court*



Aref before Mahdāwī



Rashid 'Ālī before Mahdāwī

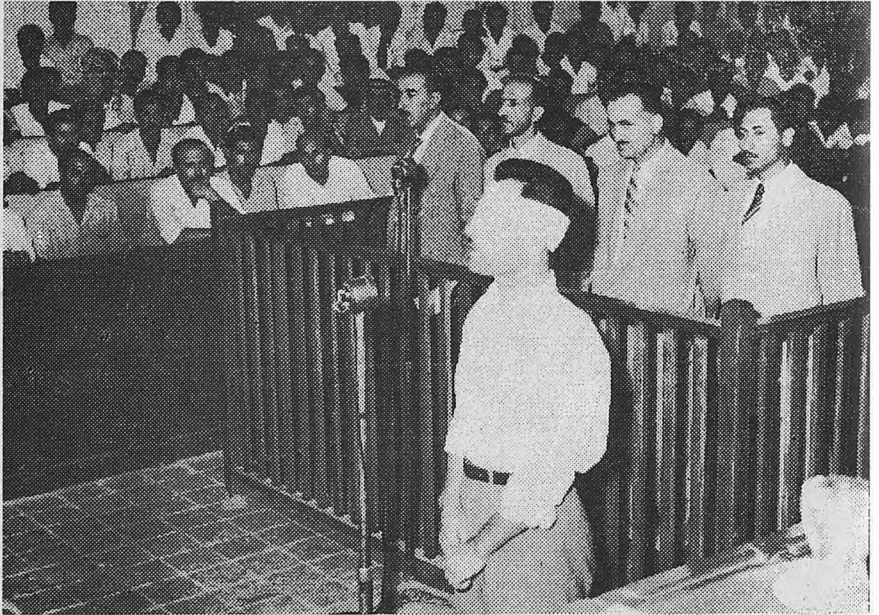
The Shawwāf Revolt



Brig. Ṭabaqchalī



Col. Shawwāf



Ṭabaqchalī and Sirrī (first and second from left in the dock) before Maḥdāwī. The witness is another accused officer who lost his eye-sight during the preliminary examination and was later executed.

tioned were Bāhā al-Dīn Nūrī, ‘Āmir ‘Abdallāh and Zakī Khayrī. If these details are correct, Khayrī would certainly have headed the Ministry of Agrarian Reform. ‘Āmir ‘Abdallāh, a man of formal education and wide travel, was probably earmarked as Foreign Minister, and the Kurd Bāhā al-Dīn Nūrī as Minister of the Interior. While this is mere conjecture, it is beyond doubt that, had Qassem acceded to these proposals, Iraq would have had a communist government in all but name.

* * *

Qassem lost no time in indicating his disapproval of the communist demands, but he did so in his own fashion. On April 30, in the course of his cordial First-of-May message to the Federation of Trade Unions—still not as yet officially constituted—he made an unfavourable reference to “parochial parties,” which “for the time being [are] of no benefit in this country; we are in a period of transition⁷ . . .” He made no mention of the demand for seats in the Cabinet.

The ICP decided to ignore the hint. On or immediately after May 1 it initiated another “education campaign” with the declared purpose of popularizing the demand for communist representation in ministerial posts. In contrast to the earlier campaign (see above, pp. 114–5) this was not intended for internal party guidance but was directed to as wide a public as possible, and made use of every available platform from home circles to open meetings. Briefed comrades expounded the issue in coffee shops and at street corners, and encouraged those with different opinions to debate their position. Interest in the campaign was apparently general and intense.

So far as can be established, the press continued its support without exception. Two Cabinet members, Dr. Kubba and Dr. Shawwāf, were quoted as approving warmly⁸; the latter had not been known as an active leftist but it seems that he was conscious of his obligations as the brother of the leader of the Shawwāf revolt. At least three other ministers reported as sympathetic were Ḥadīd, Shaybānī and Ṭālabānī.

In addition to pressing for communist representation in the Cabinet, the ICP undertook to point out the absurdity and danger in a situation in which the parties had not been legalized. It also continued to urge the reactivation of the United National Front, in an obvious quest for respectable allies. The collapse of the Shawwāf revolt had seemed to obviate

⁷ *IT*, May 1, 1959.

⁸ *IS—IT*, May 12; *IS—ANA*, May 13 [15], 1959.

such need: now the front would naturally be confined to the NDP and the UDPK besides the communists⁹.

Tension mounted. The *Arab News Agency* understated the prevailing mood when it reported from Baghdad on May 13, "the opinion of Qassem . . . on the official views of the Communist Party is eagerly awaited"¹⁰.

No more waiting was necessary. On May 14 Qassem repeated his objection to "parties and partisanship at present, for the time for this will come later." He added, more ominously, "no clique trying to dominate them should exist among the people"¹¹. That his audience on this occasion was composed of delegates to the conference of the Iraqi Federation of Industries added poignancy to his remark, and warmth to the applause.

During the following days news agencies reported growing tension between Qassem and the communists, which was furiously denied in the communist press¹².

On May 20 a vicious blow was dealt to the ICP from the flank. The National Democratic Party issued a statement announcing that its political activity would be suspended, "during the transitional period" and in accordance with Qassem's wishes, and called upon its members to concentrate their efforts on the "national organizations, trade unions and professional bodies" instead¹³. This was a double-edged thrust. Apart from breaking the front which the "national parties" presented towards the burning issue of the day it implied a threat to the communists in a sphere in which so far they had reigned supreme.

The effects were not long delayed. In view of the recent close affiliation between the NDP and communists, and in particular the position of the NDP extreme left wing, it was not surprising that a clash of loyalties should ensue. On May 21 a group of eleven prominent NDP members—the NDP boasted a high proportion of prominent members—published a statement "in the name of the majority of the party" declaring that the suspension was unconstitutional and binding only upon those who had issued it. The two first signatories were Dr. 'Abdallah Ismā'il al-Bustānī, the brother of the editor of *Ittiḥād al-Sha'b*, and Nāḥi Yūsuf, the father-in-law of the ICP secretary—another demonstration of family links in Iraqi politics. The third name was that of 'Abd al-Majīd al-Wandāwī, editor of *al-Aḥālī*¹⁴.

However, it soon became evident that the majority of the NDP supported

⁹ *IS*, May 13 [15], 1959.

¹⁰ *ANA*, May 13 [15], 1959.

¹¹ *Zamān*, May 15, 1959.

¹² e.g., *Akhbār*, Cairo, May 20, 1959; *IS*, May 20, 1959.

¹³ *Aḥālī*, May 20, 1959.

¹⁴ The full list appears in *Iraqi Review*, May 28, 1959.

the other side. The leftist protesters remained isolated and dropped out of the party. Henceforth the NDP ceased to make common cause with the ICP¹⁵. It is legitimate to speculate whether, if Chaderchi had been in Iraq at this time, the outcome would not have been different: the exchanges between *al-Ahālī* and *al-Bayān* during April and May of 1960 (see below, p. 292 et seq.) indicate this probability.

Realizing that it would be necessary to curtail its activities, the ICP acted promptly: on May 22 its political bureau announced that the "educational campaign" would be discontinued. The reason given was, significantly, not that an error had been committed or that the objective was at present unattainable, but the contrary: the purpose of the campaign—to convince the public of the legitimacy of the communist claims—had been achieved¹⁶.

This statement was not ignored by Qassem. At a press conference on the following day he said that any political group which rejected inactivation of political parties was *unintentionally* acting against the security of the republic. However, this doctrine applied only to the present "transitional period" which would be "the shortest . . . known in the history of revolutions." He added, "perhaps I was somewhat negligent and should have clarified this before, but a transitional period usually means the non-existence of parties¹⁷." Clearly Qassem's mood was as placatory as his resolve was fixed.

* * *

On May 3 the government approved the Iraqi Republic Executive Authority Law over which Qassem had previously aroused high expectations¹⁸. Its principal provision was the creation of seven ministries to deal with economic and social matters in place of the ministries of Development and of Economic Affairs, which were abolished, and of the Ministry of Communications and Public Works, whose responsibilities were curtailed. The new ministries were Agrarian Reform, Works and Housing, Planning, Commerce, Industry, Oil Affairs, and Municipal Affairs, making a total of eighteen ministries against the former thirteen. Also of importance was the abolition of the Development Board attached to the Ministry of De-

¹⁵ *Ahālī*, July 2, 1959, reported the expulsion of the dissidents from the NDP. At the same time, Wandāwī retired from the editorship of *al-Ahālī*, and 'Abdallah 'Abbās, the publisher, assumed this function also.

¹⁶ *IT*, May 24, 1959.

¹⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁸ *WI*, No. 164, May 4, 1959, pp. 12-5.

velopment and its replacement by a Board of Economic Planning, headed by the Prime Minister.

The primary aim of this reorganization was undoubtedly greater efficiency. The over-extended Ministries of Economic Affairs and of Development were broken down while development problems were upgraded to a Cabinet concern. But clearly political considerations had also motivated Qassem. Thus Dr. Kubba's position, and hence communist influence, had been reduced while Qassem's supervision of development matters was facilitated. Of greatest importance, the creation of additional ministries allowed the appointment of new ministers without corresponding dismissals, so that certain political interests could be appeased without necessarily offending others. The significance of this last consideration would depend on the alignment of the new ministers: Qassem did not hasten to make the appointments.

* * *

Whereas in May the anxieties of the ICP had on the whole been caused by the repulse of an offensive, during the following six weeks they spread to domains in which communist influence had been unchallenged for months.

In the streets bloody brawls between the communists and their enemies were renewed, with the honours evenly divided between both sides.

During the second week of June a "delegation" of some hundreds of peasants visited Baghdad to petition Qassem against the communist-dominated executive of the Federation of Peasants Societies (see below), which was allegedly using the power granted by law to prevent non-communist peasants societies from being constituted. No such step would have been conceivable a few weeks earlier. A battle between the communists and the peasants was fought out in front of the Ministry of Defence, before Qassem's eyes. Within less than a fortnight the scene repeated itself, against the same background.

After the first clash a number of peasants—obviously acting for the NDP—published a statement in *al-Ahālī* in which they accused Kāẓim Farhūd, the chairman of the Peasants Federation, of having organized the assault. Moreover, they denied his right to his position since, they claimed, he was not an agriculturist by profession and thus did not fulfil the stipulations of the recently approved General Federation of Peasants Societies Law (see below)¹⁹. The brazen attack on a communist leader of national repute signified a change in the political climate.

¹⁹ *Ahālī*—*Mid. Mir.*, June 14, 1959.

The press broke away from communist domination. *Al-Thawra* deserted the communist cause towards the end of May. The nationalist and sharply anti-communist *al-Fajr al-Jadīd*, *Baghdād* and *al-Ḥurriyya*, gutted after the Shawwāf revolt, were back in circulation by the beginning of July.

On June 11, "on the occasion of 'Īd al-Adḥā [the feast of Greater Bairam] and in view of the stability of the situation," 'Abdī announced that *mub'adūn*—persons banished to an appointed location within Iraq—were permitted to rejoin their families²⁰. Such persons could only be Arab nationalists. The names of outstanding returnees were soon mentioned: Dr. Jābir 'Umar, the ex-Minister of Education; Dr. 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Bazzāz, former dean of the Law College; Fayṣal Ḥabīb Khayzarān and Ma'ad 'Abd al-Raḥīm, both leading Iraqi Ba'this; and 'Adnān al-Rāwī, the former Iraqi announcer of *Ṣawt al-'Arab*. All these names were red rags to the communists.

The government also took steps against possible communist action through the PRF. At the end of June army units made a sudden swoop on the PRF arms depots and put them under heavy guard. The stores had always been under army supervision, but the drift of government policy was unmistakable. No publicity was given to the precaution, and the image of the PRF was left untarnished for the time being.

At the same time communists lost important positions. Apparently these reverses cannot be attributed entirely to Qassem's premeditation, but were the results of individuals attempting to restore the fortunes of their party by interceding with the Sole Leader.

The first victim was closest to Qassem, his old friend, Lt.-Col. Ghaḍbān al-Sa'd; his military secretary since the revolution. He left Iraq on May 20 to take up the post of military attaché in Moscow. Sa'd was dismissed, it was reported, because he had remonstrated with Qassem against the ban on party activity.

In June, Brig. Janābī, commander of the Second Division, and Maj. Maḥdī Ḥamīd, PRF commander of the northern region, followed Sa'd into limbo after they had paid a visit to Qassem in which angry words were exchanged over political developments. Janābī was now pensioned off and Ḥamīd put under detention. Ḥamīd was thus the first communist since the revolution to begin the return journey. Simultaneously, the dismissal of five junior officers "for inefficiency" was announced; on this occasion, *Ittiḥād al-Sha'b* shed light on their particular kind of inefficiency by informing its readers that they had been Qassem's most loyal followers²¹.

²⁰ *R. Baghdad*, June 11 [12], 1959.

²¹ *IS—ANA*, July 3 [6], 1959.

Salim al-Fakhri, the director of broadcasting, was dismissed from his key post during the first days of July. He had ignored Qassem's express orders to refrain from giving publicity to the United National Front. He was succeeded by Kāzim al-Samāwī, the publisher of *al-Insāniyya*. Samāwī was a pronounced leftist but not an ICP member, a distinction that was rapidly gaining in importance. Other communist employees of Baghdad Radio accompanied Fakhri, among them its star commentator 'Adnān al-Barrāq. Radio Baghdad ceased to be a source of communist propaganda.

A removal effected at yet another sensitive spot was that of Col. 'Abd al-Bāqī Kāzim, Baghdad director of police appointed during the communist upsurge. He was replaced by Col. Ṭaha al-Shaykhli, an officer unburdened by his past in this respect, whose accession *Ittiḥād al-Sha'b* greeted with sour comments²².

* * *

The communist reaction to these setbacks showed a mingling of hesitancy and angry frustration. It was expressed by party leaders and in the press in tones varying between pained surprise and resentment²³. Qassem's "sincere leadership" was never questioned; nor was the existence of "patriotic circles" alongside the communists denied. But otherwise the ICP decided to take the bit between its teeth. Perhaps it relied on Qassem's reluctance to assume malice. Week after week the clamour for official authorization of a National Front, with warnings against "deviation," continued through the media of the press, mass meetings and street processions.

An amended "covenant of the UNF" was published towards the end of June in the form of a loyal address to Qassem²⁴. This time it included a proposal for "early elections for a constituent assembly, direct, by secret ballot and on the basis of adult franchise." The question of overt party activities at the present time was not mentioned, probably in order not

²² *IS-ANA*, June 26 [29], 1959.

²³ The undertone of shocked disbelief in some of the earlier protests is almost comical. On May 24, Baghdad Radio broadcasted a commentary which did not attack the communists, but told them that they had a lot to be thankful for, and then equated them with other parties, including the Ba'th and the *Istiqlāl* (*R. Baghdad*, May 24 [29], 1959); 'Aziz al-Ḥajj replied in *Ṣawt al-Aḥrār* that such talk "had never been broadcast before" and that "it would adversely affect the future of the country" (*ANA*, May 27 [29], 1959).

²⁴ *Bilād*, June 30, 1959.

to provoke Qassem. Certainly it was unnecessary to emphasize that issue, since the first three groups of signatories to the address appeared as the representatives of the ICP, the NDP and the UDPK.

For the ICP, the signatories were 'Āmir 'Abdallāh, 'Abd al-Qādir Ismā'īl, Zakī Khayrī, Muḥammad Ḥusayn Abū al-'Īs, Bāhā al-Dīn Nūrī, 'Azīz al-Ḥājj and Karīm Aḥmād; it was an unprecedented breach of the party's habits of anonymity. For the NDP seven names appeared, all of whom with one exception had been among the dissenters of May 21. In exact parallel to the NDP faction, the presumed representatives of the UDPK in reality spoke for a near-communist minority of their party. They were headed by the Marxist lawyer Hamza 'Abdallāh, who had already once been excluded from the party and readmitted later; Muḥī Karīm Faṭḥallāh signed as editor of *Kha-bat*. In addition a respectable array of names represented the "national organizations," the leftist press and individuals from among the senior civil service whose publicized adherence could be expected to add lustre to the UNF.

Qassem's response to the loyal address was again negative. On July 5, at yet another press conference, he called the UNF "an erroneous concept," for the parties of which it was composed were "not in existence"; "I support its establishment after the transitional period—then it will be very strong." He added insult to injury by asserting, "had the majority supported the front I would also have supported it²⁵."

Literally, Qassem was correct. *Al-Ahālī* had already firmly rejected the UNF as a communist enterprise²⁶. At the same time the political bureau of the UDPK suspended the members who had signed the covenant and also decided, somewhat tardily, to cease party activities during the "transitional period"²⁷.

* * *

During the first fortnight of July outward relations between Qassem and the communists became strained to the point where the pretence of fatherly understanding on the one side and loyalty to the Leader on the other was wearing very thin. A glaring instance was provided at the founding congress of the General Federation of Trade Unions on July 8. A note of aggressive irritation, absent on similar occasions in the past, underlay Qassem's lengthy speech. He implied throughout that the workers of Iraq

²⁵ *R. Baghdad*, July 5 [7], 1959.

²⁶ *Ahālī*, July 2, 3, 1959.

²⁷ *ANA*, July 3 [6], 1959.

should devote their efforts towards the creation of a better future through the toil of their hands, leaving politics to those best suited to deal with them: "The execution of traitors depends on my viewpoints and not yours . . . We follow the law, proceed by way of justice . . . and our view is right!" "Imperialism does not fall merely as a result of shouting . . . Imperialism falls only as a result of work, and this is your work!" "Whoever contemplates aggression on the freedom of the individual does not deserve to be a supporter of peace!"

Sādiq al-Falāḥī, secretary of the preparatory committee, took up the challenge. In his address to the congress he stressed at length the political character of the trade unions, which was defined as the organized expression of the Iraqi worker's will to fight. That his mood was no more conciliatory than Qassem's was shown by minor, but intensely disagreeable, sallies against government departments. These, he alleged, had of late "unexpectedly" demonstrated hostility to "union workers," and their "measures must be checked immediately." When Falāḥī described the National Front as a "great bulwark against the conspiracies of imperialism," Qassem banged on the table and left²⁸.

Qassem was also deeply angered by the conspiracy mania which again gripped the communist press from about the end of June. This was no doubt generated by the recent anti-communist outbreaks and, at a deeper level, by realization that victory, which had seemed so near, was slipping from view. Calls for "no leniency," coupled with reminiscences of the days when plots had been "relentlessly crushed" by the people, made ominous reading in *Ittiḥād al-Sha'b* and *Ṣawt al-Ahrār* almost daily. Qassem did not care to see his first year of government terminate in an atmosphere of hysteria; in a broadcast early in July he specifically called out to the leftist editors: "Why do you persistently interfere in such matters? . . . As your brother, I pray you not to confuse public opinion by writing of the occurrence of plots. I assure you that no plots will occur in this country²⁹." But the clamour went on.

The communists may not have contented themselves with mere warnings against plots.

On the eve of the anniversary of the revolution it was claimed by anti-communist propaganda outside Iraq that a "communist plan" had just been uncovered by "security circles in Baghdad." This plan, which was re-

²⁸ *R. Baghdad*, July 8 [9, 10], 1959. According to this source Qassem left somewhat later, but an eyewitness who talked to the present author was insistent. The Baghdad Radio announcer may have taken care to hush up a scandal.

²⁹ *R. Baghdad*, July 5 [7], 1959.

produced in detail, provided, among other acts of provocation, for armed assaults on anti-communist bodies wishing to take part in the anniversary celebrations. The action was to be undertaken in order to impress Qassem and the public with communist strength, and in particular to terrorize the anti-communists into acceptance of communist domination³⁰.

Later, at his crucial press conference after the Kirkuk massacres (see below), Qassem produced carbon copies of what he asserted were "maps showing certain districts in Baghdad on which the homes of people, who according to them [i.e., the Students Federation] were suspects [of plotting], were marked and numbered." Proof that the maps as such were genuine was supplied by a communist gloss which describes them as a completely innocent scheme for "guarding the capital" by the PRF and the Students Federation, which was an affiliated body of the PRF for all practical purposes³¹. But "guarding the capital" is an ambiguous expression.

A sign of shortening temper on the communist side was that the demand for inclusion of party members in the Cabinet was renewed³². The ICP had remained silent over this issue for more than a month, although the claim had never been officially withdrawn.

On July 9, the political bureau of the ICP issued a statement drawing attention to the "gravity of the situation" in which, in its view, the republic now found itself. It reiterated the party's "unshakable confidence," not in the Sole Leader but in "the solidarity of the people and their patriotic forces with their brave national army under the leadership of 'Abd al-Karim Qassem'"—a subtle difference, but a difference all the same. More to the point, the political bureau decried the "policy of excessive leniency towards the reactionaries and the counter-revolutionaries" which it considered responsible for the present state of affairs. The statement continued, "Our party deems it necessary . . . to take a firm stand in removing all the reactionary and suspect elements from the sensitive departments of the state and to pursue a firm policy towards the enemies of the revolution who have exploited the policy of complacency and leniency in order to resume their criminal activities³³ . . ."

The ICP statement, it will be noted, registered that a remarkable development had taken place: the party was no longer making demands on the government but announcing its own line of action on matters which

³⁰ *MENA*, July 12 [14], 1959.

³¹ Private information.

³² e.g., *IS—R. Beirut*, July 11 [13], 1959.

³³ *Iraqi Review*, July 23, 1959.

ought to have been the prerogative of the state. However, in view of the developments of the following weeks, it may be questioned whether the leaders of the ICP themselves were quite clear as to the implications of their stated policy.

* * *

It may be considered certain that the ICP did not seriously contemplate Qassem's overthrow by direct action. At the end of June it was rumoured that communist officers of the Armoured Corps had been arrested as parties to a conspiracy which involved the assassination of Qassem and the members of the Sovereignty Council prior to a takeover. Allegations of this nature were completely denied, with anger and contempt, by communist sources, and the veracity of their denials is borne out by subsequent events. The character of the ICP leadership as shown in the party's history, and the global policy of the Soviet Union at this period, also point to the absence of a conspiracy. Attempts to manipulate, intimidate or outmanoeuvre Qassem were a different matter.

* * *

While Qassem and the communists were locked in a battle which, to the close observer, was clearly being fought for the mastery of Iraq, several of the events that occurred seemed to indicate a strengthening of the communist hold over state and society. An example was the sphere of "national organizations" in which further communist consolidation was achieved. It is only in retrospect that these phenomena may be recognized to result from an impetus received at an earlier period; in fact the wheels were slowing down.

On May 10, 1959, the General Federation of Peasants Societies Law was passed³⁴. The federation was to be "a professional peasants organization with the aim of safeguarding the Iraqi republic and its democratic regime, raising the social and economic standards of peasants, and protecting their interests." The law outlined the table of organization of the federation. Its pyramid structure of local societies of fifty "or more" members at the base, and sub-district, district and regional federations up to the national federation, very closely resembled the organization of the ICP (see Appendix).

The impression of communist editing is strengthened by the hierarchy

³⁴ *WI*, No. 166, May 10, 1959, p. 5.

provided for in the law: an annual general congress, theoretically the source of authority, would instruct the executive committee; this in turn had as its handmaid the permanent head office—the equivalent of the political bureau. There could be no doubt that in reality the pull would be exerted in the reverse direction. The most important provision was section 7 which designated the general federation to ratify the formation of peasants societies. The wording left the federation no discretion, provided that the applicants met the conditions set out in the law—a point expressly confirmed by Qassem³⁵. But clearly this would be a powerful lever in the hands of the central functionaries who could mould the federation by refusing or delaying their assent to anti-communist applicants.

The constituent committee of the Peasants Federation differed from other “national organizations” of the period: although the majority of its members were communists, about one-third were resolute non-communists³⁶. In the main, this minority were NDP members, party fellows of the Minister of Agriculture, who could count on the full protection of Qassem and the authorities against any attempt at intimidation. Prominent among them was ‘Arāk al-Zigam, a well-to-do farmer from the Upper Euphrates region.

The clashes in June over the constitution of peasants societies have been mentioned. The differences were patched up for the time being at a meeting of the full committee in July, convened “at the desire of the Sole Leader.” Afterwards a resolution was published promising that all applications, past and future, would be approved³⁷.

This stage of agrarian policy was rounded up when on July 14 Qassem handed over the first title-deeds of lands expropriated under the Agrarian Reform Law to their new peasant owners—ownership as qualified by the law³⁸. Although expropriation under the law had been proceeding since early December 1958, formal distribution, as distinct from the grant of temporary leases, had been delayed “pending settlement . . . in accordance with modern methods³⁹.”

³⁵ *R. Baghdad*, July 5 [7], 1959.

³⁶ This is the proportion stated by *Ittihad al-Sha'b*, Sept. 18, 1959; the newspaper considered the NDP share over-generous.

³⁷ *R. Baghdad*, July 7 [9], 1959.

³⁸ *R. Baghdad*, July 5 [7], 1959; *Revolution*, II, p. 257. On that occasion title deeds were distributed to 2,207 peasants. By early summer about 1,000,000 dunums had actually been taken over by the agrarian reform administration (*Revolution*, I, p. 75).

³⁹ Qassem's expression (*R. Baghdad*, July 5 [7], 1959).

The founding congress of the Iraqi General Federation of Trade Unions took place at Baghdad on July 8–11, 1959. Its 258 delegates, who included five women, represented the fifty-one trade unions then licensed in Iraq, with a total membership of 275,000. It again proved to be a demonstration of communist strength. The committees were firmly in the hands of the ICP. Falāḥī, elected chairman, ‘Ali Shukur, vice-chairman, and Tālib ‘Abd al-Jabbār, secretary, were all party members. It was resolved that the GFTU should join the United National Front and the communist-directed World Federation of Trade Unions⁴⁰. Obviously the association with the UNF was a direct provocation to Qassem, not altogether surprising after the brush between Qassem and Falāḥī over the matter (see above, p. 214).

Prima facie a consolidation of communist power was the Iraqi Journalists Association Law promulgated at the beginning of June⁴¹. The most significant provisions of the law in this respect were sections 5 and 6 which laid down that membership of the association was obligatory for all journalists “and others working with the press.” The admittance of members was regulated through application to the competent committees; these would certainly be communist-dominated, in conformity with the prevailing shade of the press.

Communist publications continued to flourish and even expand at this period. May 1, 1959, saw the first legal issue of *Azadie* (“Liberty”), the organ of the Kurdish branch of the ICP. Like *Ittiḥād al-Sha‘b*, *Azadie* had appeared illegally under the monarchy. After licensing it was first published as a weekly in Kirkuk and from August 1959 three times weekly in Baghdad. In Baghdad there also appeared in the summer of 1959 two ostensibly independent, but in reality communist, weeklies, *al-Ḥaḍāra* (“Civilization”) and *al-Thabāt* (“Perseverance”). The Basra *Ṣawt al-Ṭālī’a* (“Voice of the Pioneer”) became the most important communist newspaper in the provinces; it was avowedly a party organ.

Full-page advertisements appearing in the leftist press during May and June attested that communist book publishing was also reaching new peaks. Fifteen Arabic titles, including translations of Plekhanov and Mao, figured in one such advertisement of the communist Baghdad Publishing House.

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⁴⁰ R. Baghdad, July 16 [18], 1959; *Iraqi Review*, July 23, 1959.

⁴¹ *WI*, No. 187, June 23, 1959, pp. 1–3.

In Arab affairs the continuation of the Qassem-communist alliance was demonstrated. A "popular delegation" of ten members, headed by 'Aziz Sharif and solidly pro-communist in composition, left Baghdad on an official mission on June 1 for a five-week tour to "several Arab countries . . . to contact governments and popular organizations and explain the Iraqi Republic's attitude towards Arab solidarity"⁴². The grant of asylum on the same day to Lt.-Gen. 'Afif al-Bizri, the pro-communist former Syrian Chief-of-Staff, also enhanced the impression that in his policy towards Arab nationalism Qassem was still firmly aligned with the communists.

In the wake of the formal secession from the Baghdad Pact, further ties with the West were severed by Iraq. On May 30, 1959, Iraq informed the United States that she had decided to annul three agreements concluded by the former regime: the Military Aid Agreement of 1954, its Supplement of 1955, and the Aid Agreement governed by the Eisenhower doctrine of 1957. A week later Qassem announced his decision to withdraw Iraq from the sterling area. In both cases it was stressed that the connections had been a stumbling block to the country's Positive Neutralism, but any intention of impairing relations with either the United States or Great Britain was emphatically denied⁴³.

* * *

In honour of the first anniversary of the revolution Qassem published two decisions which, whatever else was intended, were bound to appeal to those within the communist leadership whose instincts inclined towards hopeful temporizing. The first announcement gave details of the long-expected Cabinet appointments, and the second contained a promise by Qassem that political parties would be legally authorized in January 1960, with parliamentary elections to follow.

In the evening hours of July 13, with the country geared for the celebrations, it was announced by a Republican Decree that the Iraqi Republic Executive Authority Law of May 3 had been put into effect⁴⁴ (see above, pp. 209–10). The appointments and changes involved were as follows:

Minister of Planning, Dr. Ṭal'at al-Shaybānī (hitherto Development);

Minister of Agrarian Reform and *Minister of Oil Affairs* (acting), Dr. Ibrāhīm Kubba (hitherto Economic Affairs);

⁴² *R. Baghdad*, June 1 [3], 1959; *Mid. Mir.*, June 7, 1959.

⁴³ *R. Baghdad*, June 1 [3], 4 [6], 5 [8], 1959.

⁴⁴ *R. Baghdad*, July 13 [15], 1959; *WI*, No. 198, July 22, 1959, pp. 1–2.

Minister of Industry (acting), Muḥammad Ḥadīd (in addition to Finance);

Minister of Municipal Affairs, Dr. Nazīha al-Dulaymī;

Minister of Works and Housing, ‘Awnī Yūsuf;

Minister of Guidance, Dr. Fayṣal al-Sāmīr;

Minister of Commerce, ‘Abd al-Laṭīf al-Shawwāf.

It will be observed that no incumbents had been dismissed. Dr. Sāmīr replaced Fu’ād ‘Ārif who had been acting since Jamīl’s retirement abroad in February. ‘Awnī Yūsuf, a Kurdish lawyer and hitherto a judge of the Kirkuk Court of Cassation, had close links with the UDPK, although he was not a member. ‘Abd al-Laṭīf al-Shawwāf, since the revolution director-general of the Dates Association, was a cousin of the Minister of Health.

The significance of the departmental reorganization has been examined. The significance of the personal changes was complex; they may be classed as a further instance of political manoeuvre on Qassem’s part. Dr. Kubba, an unaccommodating doctrinaire, had been demoted from his economic empire. While he was stamped as a communist in the eyes of the general public, however, to the ICP he was at best a useful outsider; his decline might please non-communists without being too offensive to the party. Shaybānī, uninterested in politics, was innocuous as Minister of Planning. Ḥadīd, closest to Qassem of the NDP leaders and the model of a “national industrialist,” would be acceptable to both local and Western economic interests without unduly disturbing the ICP.

As to the new ministers, it was almost inevitable that inveterate enemies like Fā’iq al-Sāmarrā’ī should classify them all as “communists⁴⁵,” while at the other extreme the usually knowledgeable *Arab News Agency* asserted that none were “known to be ICP members⁴⁶.” In general, it was assumed that Dr. Dulaymī, Yūsuf and Dr. Sāmīr were “left-wingers.” If this damaged Qassem’s image in Western eyes, the damage had to be borne; no one could seriously maintain that a real breach had been opened to communist domination in the Cabinet.

The most important aspect for Qassem to consider must have been the effect on the ICP, still easily the most powerful force in Iraq outside the army, still a necessary ally against a common adversary and still, for all Qassem knew, capable of being driven by sudden disappointment into

⁴⁵ *Mid. Mir.*, July 19, 1959.

⁴⁶ *ibid.*

armed insurrection. In this respect also Qassem's tactics were brilliant: he had satisfied the communists' demand to be represented in the Cabinet—they knew, if the public did not, that Dr. Dulaymī was a veteran party member. However, Dr. Dulaymī was not of the innermost circle of the ICP whose members might have challenged Qassem's supremacy in the Cabinet with some chance of success. Her department did not furnish a key to wide powers, although the social responsibilities involved did not permit the communists to complain that it was insignificant. Most important from Qassem's point of view was that Dr. Dulaymī was chairman of a "national organization," and therefore ostensibly non-partisan. This not only prevented the communists from advertising the appointment as their victory but also limited their freedom to challenge the principle behind the step. They could not assert that it was an "arbitrary" or personal appointment directly opposed to the political representation on which the ICP had been so determined since the end of April.

* * *

The announcement concerning the promised constitutional development was delivered by Qassem during a speech broadcast from the Military College on July 14⁴⁷. The relevant passages are quoted together with the notes of the monitoring service (*italicized*):

"Brothers, . . . this [transitional] period will end very soon. Before Army Day, on January 6, we shall all be celebrating the licensing of parties in this country [*applause and cheers*]. After that day, brothers, with patience, belief and wisdom, we shall take the necessary steps to draw up and enact the permanent Constitution . . . [*applause*].

"The Constitution will not be enacted until the people have given their views and a plebiscite has been carried out on its provisions [*applause and cheers*. *Someone in the audience hailed Qassem as 'first President of the Iraqi Republic'*']. . . Be sure, brothers, that I am a person who is indifferent to everything—indifferent to power . . . All I am eager for is to die for the sake of these people [*applause*].

"Brothers, by next year, we shall be working hard for the election of a National Assembly [*majlis waṭani*] for the country [*applause and cheers*]. This assembly will be elected in the freedom which the people have desired and which they have not tasted before . . . We ask those members

⁴⁷ R. Baghdad, July 14 [16], 1959.

of the people who will succeed us to struggle for freedom and prosperity for all the people . . .”

The distribution of applause suggests that communists led the cheers. The vague hint that Qassem might abdicate his power to “successors” makes wishful thinking surrounding the definite promise of party freedom comprehensible. Nobody questioned the assumption that the authorities would not then be able to withhold a licence from the ICP, even should they wish to do so⁴⁸. That the ICP, once licensed, would command a greater following than any other party, Iraqi communists considered self-evident.

It is worth noting that Qassem did not say that the *transitional period* itself would end on January 6, 1960, although even a careful observer would easily have received this impression.

* * *

The main event of the July 14 celebrations at Baghdad was a military march past before Qassem at which the new Soviet equipment was paraded. On July 15 there was a monster procession of “national organizations,” including a massive PRF detachment, unarmed. The slogans displayed had received the blessing of the official celebrations committee, accompanied with a request to refrain from producing others, “whether they are to be shouted or written on signs and posters.”

The celebrations were marred by serious incidents. Communist mobs wrecked the editorial offices of *Baghdād* and attacked the homes of two senior officers who had particularly incurred the odium of the ICP, Col. Shams al-Din ‘Abdallah, president of the first military court, and Col. ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Jidda, commander of the military police. Clashes also took place in several quarters of Baghdad and in a number of provincial towns. The pattern was nearly uniform in the localities affected: the anti-communists, who had plucked up courage during the past two months, organized processions of their own in celebration of Revolution Day. The communists, regarding these processions as deliberate provocations and failing to procure a ban from the local authorities, set upon them in force. A number of the celebrants were killed and there were many wounded.

⁴⁸ e.g., *The Economist*, July 25, Dec. 12, 1959. The last mentioned is an extreme instance of the pessimism engendered in the West by Qassem’s promise. *The Economist* stood out among the British press of the period with its gloomy prognostications concerning the communist danger in Iraq. Whether the correspondent responsible, Mr. H.A.R. Philby, adopted this attitude as a conscious feint, or in response to some psychological twist, must for the time being remain anybody’s guess.

CHAPTER 17 CLIMAX AND BREAK

KIRKUK

Amid this atmosphere of fear and unrest there burst the news of the Kirkuk massacre.

The riots which broke out at Kirkuk on Revolution Day lasted for three days, and cost about one hundred lives, with many more men and women mutilated or injured; no accurate figures are available. However, the image that was ineffaceably burned on the minds of the Iraqi public was that a massacre had been deliberately planned and despatched with diabolical bloodlust by the Iraqi Communist Party in order to terrorize the nation into submission and clear the way for the final takeover. In the creation of this image Qassem had a decisive part.

There is no doubt that the number of Turcomans and anti-communists killed at Kirkuk on July 14–16 greatly exceeded the numbers of Kurds and communists killed. The communists also frequently behaved with insane cruelty. In particular, the Kurdish troops went berserk. The city was under communist domination when armoured troops arrived from Baghdad and Habbaniya on July 17, under the command of Col. 'Abd al-Rahmān 'Ārif—the elder brother of 'Abd al-Salām and later President of Iraq—to restore order.

It cannot be ascertained who had offered the first provocation on July 14. There is no valid evidence of an order from communist headquarters at Baghdad to carry out a planned massacre and it is reasonably certain that no such order was given¹. Unhappily, Kirkuk was predestined for an outbreak of this sort, with a mixed population of Arabs, Kurds and Turcomans, ever mutually antagonistic. As recently as October 1958 it had been the scene of inter-community riots which the governments at both Baghdad

¹ Vernier (p. 168) has adduced as evidence for *local* communist premeditation that before July 14 Kirkuk communists advised their relatives to evacuate women and children from the city. But this story, as far as the present author could find out, is of Egyptian origin, which makes it suspect in the context. Even if it is true it may show presentiment rather than premeditation.

and Ankara had sought to minimize. The thousands of workers at the oil installations, the majority of whom were Kurds, had nurtured a local communist branch with a fighting record unrivalled in Iraq. Moreover, the labourers often found themselves in debt to the tradespeople who were largely Turcomans. The commanders of the Second Division and of the PRF northern region, whose headquarters were in Kirkuk and who were both communists, had recently been deposed (see above, p. 211); no successors had as yet been appointed. It should have been foreseen that army and militia were at one and the same time angry and without authoritative leadership. In a situation charged with dynamite, no central directive was necessary to strengthen the resolve of local communists to teach their adversaries a bloody lesson, should occasion arise.

* * *

During the aftermath of the Shawwāf revolt the communists and their allies had been responsible for many more deaths than occurred at their hands four months later in Kirkuk; but despite the efforts of Egyptian propaganda they had never inspired remotely the same horror in the Iraqi public. The time was not then ripe for an anti-communist upsurge; nor was Qassem ready himself. At Mosul there had also been an incontestable excuse for communist action.

On July 19, after news of the bloodshed had been made known, Qassem, speaking at the inauguration of the Chaldean Church of St. Joseph at Baghdad, condemned the "cruelty and blind fanaticism" of the recent events in Kirkuk. The "anarchists," who had given vent to their grudges and hates, were responsible. Unless they returned "to the road of humanity and reason," Qassem stated, he would have to crush them, however greatly he might dislike cruelty. Qassem particularly exhorted the army rank and file to follow "after today" only the orders given by "their officers and the supreme command." The deception of simple soldiers would no longer be possible, he declared, adding that the innocent would not be punished instead of the actual aggressors; "may God overlook past errors²."

At first the ICP affected unconcern. The term "anarchists" had not yet achieved the special currency which it was to acquire in Iraq within a few days and would retain in the future, while it was arguable how seriously Qassem regarded the affair. The ICP adopted the position that the Arab

² *Zamān*, July 20, 1959.

nationalists were to blame for the riots and that the communists had not exceeded the limits of legitimate self-defence³.

This explanation was upheld in the communist press for about a week. Then there was a sudden reversal. At the end of July it was admitted that "excesses" had after all occurred at Kirkuk about which ICP headquarters had not previously been informed. All true patriots were called upon to close their ranks, observe discipline and eschew a display of over-zealousness. It was argued, however, that the provocations preceding the riots had been great and were continuing. The public was asked to take into consideration the services the party had rendered to the republic. This time the communists did not press for "no leniency."

What were the developments that forced the ICP at last to face the principal issue—the party's relationship with Qassem?

Public opinion was now loudly insisting that the communists were the main enemy of law and order. In this conclusion it was energetically supported in word and deed by the highest authorities. Qassem's reference to "anarchists" was identified in plain words as meaning "communists" by the anti-communist press⁴. Notices began to make their appearance in the newspapers, signed by indignant citizens, denying that they had belonged to "a certain political group." It was a sure sign of the wind of change. 'Abdī, who had been promoted a Major-General on the anniversary of the revolution, summarily ordered the dissolution of the Committees for the Defence of the Republic and halted all training and activities of the Popular Resistance Force⁵. The communist headquarters at Kirkuk were closed by the army, and suspected perpetrators of the recent horrors were systematically arrested.

Then, on July 29, Qassem summoned the Iraqi press, and ostensibly addressing himself to the journalists, nailed home his point with a force and directness that he had not been known to display in public previously⁶. The press, he said, had of late done the country a great disservice by fabricating tales of "plots against the democratic forces." As a direct result of this agitation, atrocities had been committed, and others attempted, which were worse than those of the Mongol Hulagu or even of the Zionists.

Qassem then displayed photographs taken at Kirkuk of mutilated corpses and asked his audience how it was possible that these, "your Turco-

³ e.g., a letter signed by "national organizations" from Kirkuk, in *IS*, July 18, 1959.

⁴ e.g., *Thawra*, July 23, 24, 1959.

⁵ *R. Baghdad*, July 25, 29—*IMB*, July 26, 30, 1959, respectively.

⁶ *Zamān*, July 30; *R. Baghdad*, July 29 [31], 1959.

man brethren," could be the enemies of the people. "The anarchists" who had inspired these acts were traitors, worse than fascists—a particularly nasty insult. Qassem twice repeated to all present that there would be no second Kirkuk. "From now on nobody will hurt the people, for the army will crush such attempts instantly." There could be no doubt that Qassem was in earnest.

In case the objects of his anger should again affect unconcern, Qassem made identification easy. "Certain organizations," he said, had appealed to him in the name of the democratic forces in the country; but it was he, Qassem, who stood for the democratic forces, and not organizations that subscribed to shameful slogans like "Down with the plots—the ropes are ready." Since all the "organizations" were then under communist leadership, the reference was unambiguous.

Yet with all this brusqueness Qassem did not name the communists (*shuyū'iyyūn*). It was an omission which might be understood as willingness to save a prospect of cooperation on his own terms. The communists evidently understood that this was his intention, as subsequent developments show.

On August 2 Qassem repeated the gist of this statement to a trade union delegation, but in a more conciliatory manner. He did not blame a particular "party or principle," only "criminals against the country." He concluded with, "Let bygones be bygones; let us start afresh⁷."

* * *

The following day *Ittiḥād al-Sha'b* published a statement, described as the summary of a report "to be published soon," on the deliberations and resolutions of the central committee of the ICP at a session held "in mid-July⁸." The announcement heralded a dramatic turn in the fortunes of Iraq under Qassem: the ICP had broken off its assault.

The session had "expressed strong self-criticism of the party's stand concerning several problems." In particular, the party had exaggerated the dangers of "deviation" in its efforts to achieve participation in government, and had thereby antagonized "the highest authorities and other patriotic forces which had proved their capability to defend the republic." The statement also deplored recent cases of "murder, desecration of corpses, torture and loot," which were entirely in opposition to the principles of communism, and asserted that the criminals should be severely punished.

⁷ *Zamān*, Aug. 3, 1959.

⁸ *IS*, Aug. 3, 1959.

These mistakes and evils were analysed as the outcome of "false appreciations" on the part of a "personal leadership" acting in defiance of the "Leninist principles" of collective leadership. The statement assured the government of the party's loyalty without reservation.

The full report of some twelve thousand words was published in *Ittiḥād al-Sha'b* towards the end of August⁹.

THE ICP REPORT

The report was superscribed "For the Consolidation of the Unity of the Patriotic Forces in Defence of the Republic and the Gains of the Revolution," with the title, "Report of the Enlarged Session of the Central Committee of the Iraqi Communist Party, mid-July 1959." It is reasonably certain, however, that the analysis was accomplished and adopted later, in the last days of the month, and predated to avoid the appearance of a volte-face resulting from Qassem's recent threatening attitude.

The opening section of the report repeated the definition of "the basic forces of the revolution" and the character of the regime. The former were "the workers, the peasants, the petty bourgeoisie and the middle bourgeoisie (the anti-imperialist national bourgeoisie)"; the latter was described as "national, anti-imperialist and anti-feudalist." It was the active cooperation of these "basic forces" with the army "under the leadership of Qassem" which confirmed the ICP's estimation that the 14th July was a true revolution, and not a mere "*coup d'état* from above".

* * *

During the year under review, the report noted, much had been achieved, in both the external and internal spheres. Certain attainments could be acknowledged without reservation, such as the secession from the Baghdad Pact, and social legislation. Other measures had not been implemented sufficiently: the extent of the purges undertaken in "some" government departments had been "relative"; "a few" reactionary laws had been annulled. The "patriotic forces," chief among them the ICP, had succeeded in frustrating the conspiracies against the republic and had reached the peak of their influence and popularity after the Shawwāf revolt.

* * *

⁹ The present author has relied on a reprint in the same daily of August 29, 1959. An "official" English translation was published in *Iraqi Review*, Sept. 6, 1959. A French translation appeared in *Orient*, No. 11, 3^e trimestre, 1959, pp. 175-221.

However, despite its deserved successes the ICP had committed mistakes and manifested shortcomings. The basic error with which the party charged itself was under-estimation of the non-communist elements among the "patriotic forces." These in practice implied the "national bourgeoisie" crystallizing about the NDP—and Qassem himself, although Qassem's person in this context was only hinted at. The brashness and crudity of communist behaviour and communist demands, born of "conceit and intoxication with victory," had been bound "to distort the party's intentions in the eyes of the government, of considerable sectors of the Iraqi and Arab bourgeoisie and of many moderate forces" and render them "panicky." It was an error for which "leftist extremism" was responsible.

Closely related to the above was the indifference that the party had shown towards certain "excesses", detailed as "the dragging of bodies, torture of detainees, looting and trespassing on the rights and liberties of citizens¹⁰." These had been the acts of "politically backward masses." They were the by-product of a "spontaneous movement" which was the natural outcome of forty years of oppression and misery; but the duty of the party to maintain control had been clear, and had been neglected.

* * *

It was not denied that the issue of communist participation in the government, and similar party "slogans" were "correct" theoretically. But tactically they were unrealistic, "rigid," overly self-assured. The circuitous phrasing of the key sentence should be noted:

"In the political circumstances which followed the revolution—where the revolutionary government had embarked on an anti-imperialist and anti-feudalist policy, while it was, and still is, a transitional government whose members were chosen by the leader of the revolution—the slogan for participation in the government, isolated as it was from the leadership of the regime, was a mistaken isolationist act which did not take into account the realities of the revolution and the relationship of the national forces, and it was thus bound to harm the unity of these forces and the solidarity needed for the defence of the republic¹¹."

* * *

As noted previously (see above, p. 201) much attention was devoted to an examination of the opportunities which had presented themselves to

¹⁰ *CC Report*, p. 5.

¹¹ *ibid.*, p. 4.

the party with the revolution, and their effect on the party's development. The committee concluded that while there had been an unprecedented increase in membership and activity, quality had been seriously impaired. Planning, discipline, education, had all failed to meet the challenge of the hour.

The failure was attributed to a narrow-minded party "bureaucracy" which "had weakened initiative and the creative spirit, and decreased its moral standing with good people¹²."

The report assigned responsibility for the failures. Collective leadership had broken down. Since the Shawwāf revolt, "some comrades of the political bureau" had neglected to conduct the party's business in touch with, and in the spirit of, the central committee, which had held no enlarged session since September 1958. Although he was not mentioned by name, it was implied that a partner in sin had been the editor of *Ittiḥād al-Sha'b*. Hence, "mistakes of policy and organization ensued which could have been avoided by maintaining collective leadership and convening the central committee." It was stressed that the conduct censured was an offence against Marxist-Leninist principles¹³. The offenders, however, had admitted their mistakes.

* * *

The measures to be taken in order to eradicate these shortcomings and prevent their recurrence were cited at length. They were:

A return to "collective leadership" and the elimination of the "bureaucracy" by giving more scope to the central committee and by encouraging constructive criticism from the grass-roots organizations;

Firm control of party activities at all levels, stern disciplinary measures to be taken whenever necessary to ensure conformity with the agreed line;

Careful handling of admittance to party membership without prejudicing its character as a "party of the masses";

A relentless and coordinated effort directed towards guidance and education.

The report examined in detail the danger that the crisis might give rise to "deviations." These might be either "leftist," in the spirit of the "rigid

¹² *ibid.*, p. 8.

¹³ *ibid.*, p. 8.

slogans" just condemned, or "rightist," which was denounced in abusive terms as Titoist, opportunist, defeatist, "Arab communist" (designation of a splinter group active in Syria and Iraq in the earlier 1950s), "liberalist."

* * *

These errors and dangers, however, did not affect the party's analysis of the forces sustaining the revolution and those arrayed against it. The party continued to expect that its partners among the "patriotic forces" would reciprocate its goodwill and readiness to cooperate, and would recognize the overriding necessity for solidarity against external and internal foes. Above all, it expected that the "national leadership" would purge itself of the unjust suspicions it had harboured against the party, that it would abrogate and reverse the hostile measures which had been taken against the party and its members, and would again join the party in exercising vigilance against imperialism and its tools. The party wished to make it clear that it accepted the leadership of 'Abd al-Karīm Qassem without reservation. In particular, Qassem's recent speech which fixed a date for the licensing of parties and general elections [*sic*] was regarded as inspiring confidence; there was no hint of fear that the promise might not be honoured.

These expectations were succinctly expressed:

"The end of the transition period and the achievement of our normal democratic life will mean a great turning-point in the history of our revolution . . . The organization of forces on these [party] lines will provide excellent conditions for the unification of the patriotic forces on a single front . . .

"The transfer of responsibility to the representatives of the people . . . will be of great significance for the future of the country¹⁴ . . ."

The concluding chapter of the report was a declaration, in rhetorical vein, that despite "the relative decline of the revolutionary movement after a rise such as never had been witnessed before" the Iraqi Communist Party was resolved to maintain its part in the national movement and the defence of the republic, "taking as its guide the principles of Marxism-Leninism and relying on the faith and support of the people¹⁵."

* * *

¹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 7.

¹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 10.

Three main questions arise:

What changes were effected in the aims, the assessment of the situation and the overall strategy of the ICP by the crisis of late July 1959?

What picture emerges of the ICP leadership? Its cohesion, methods, loyalties, capacities?

What conclusion can Qassem have drawn from the report?

If it is asked whether the changes recommended in the report entailed a reversal of the aims and strategy of the party as a result of the crisis, the answer is only a qualified negative. The ultimate aim of a communist party is always to attain sole power; however, in the present instance this truism is an over-simplification. It is hinted in the report that the policy of moderation, cooperation and compromise recommended was an intermediate stage, and that at some time in the future the ICP, embodying the revolutionary will of the masses, would take over. But these hints are so faint that they appear rather in accord with a genuine conviction among the leadership that the assumption of power was outside practical politics in the foreseeable circumstances. Whatever the ultimate aim, the chief task of the ICP at present, and in the indeterminate future, was stated as being to *combat "imperialism" in cooperation with all "other patriotic forces" under the guidance of the "national leadership."*

The definition of the three key terms is pragmatic, for all the wordy circumlocutions. The "national leadership" is a synonym for the regime headed by 'Abd al-Karīm Qassem, assuming that it would neither defer to a Nasser-led pan-Arabism nor explicitly pursue an anti-Soviet or anti-communist policy. The "other patriotic forces" are that part of the Iraqi body politic supporting the national government, as circumscribed above, and especially the National Democratic Party. "Imperialism" is the antonym of "patriotic forces," also extending outside Iraq.

The leadership of the party resolved to see its revised conception of party policy accepted by the rank and file at every level—if possible by persuasion, otherwise by the harshest means at its disposal. It is clear that no insurmountable opposition was expected.

The new assessment of the situation was based on fundamentals: the result was less a substitution of one concept for another than a change effected by a process of elimination, streamlining and reassertion. On the other hand, it must be presumed that the more limited concept of what was now stated as "correct" also had its influential adherents previously, and it was these who had imposed their view when the party faced a virtual ultimatum from Qassem.

There is no hint in the report whether a total struggle against Qassem for power had been contemplated. The report does, however, show why it rejected such a course: the "realities" in Iraq precluded a bid for sole power by the ICP. The regime controlled the resources of the state, and appeared determined to use these resources unless its own terms of co-existence were accepted. On the other hand, these terms were not unpromising: the regime was "objectively anti-imperialist"; Qassem had taken care not to manoeuvre either himself or the communists into positions of declared hostility, and a retreat with honour was still open. More important, Qassem had unequivocally promised the resurgence of free party life at a given date in the not too distant future. The ICP leaders had reason to be convinced that their party was more popular and better organized than any rival. All they had to do—so it appeared—in order to pluck the fruits of victory in comfort and security, was to bide their time. They do not seem to have feared that by procrastination the party might lose its capacity for daring and offensive exertion.

* * *

With all its blemishes, the picture of the party that emerges from the report is not that of a diseased organism. The party had been through a crisis. It was caught in a situation which it could not master by assault; so, after some muddling, it cut its losses.

The report was evidently drawn up in an atmosphere of confusion and tension, where the louder voices were the more conspicuous, but not necessarily the strongest. The "leftist extremists" had had no reason to consider themselves otherwise than orthodox previously: the report even concedes that the errors born of "conceit" had been prevalent at every level. The deviationists might give some trouble; nevertheless, unity had been preserved and no real split, like the differences which had plagued the party under the monarchy, was expected. The operative resolutions apparently represented a genuine consensus of opinion.

Very little information can be ascertained about the ICP leadership. Responsibility for the failure is attributed to the fact that individual leadership rather than "collective" leadership was exercised. Yet no central personality emerges. The failure to mention even one name in the report was, it seems, not merely due to the obsession with "collective leadership," but shows that there was no real leader. While "some comrades of the political bureau" and the "editor of *Ittihad al-Sha'b*" were reproved, they again were not named in person, although there was no need to preserve secrecy in the circumstances then prevailing in Iraq. It is hard to

avoid the conclusion that the communist leaders preferred to return to their familiar habits of anonymity.

The leadership thus remaining obscure, the decision to give way before Qassem's resentment becomes clearer. Under the cloak of political necessity, it relieved the party of the burden of action. The communist leaders were no cowards; most of them had made, and were yet to make, the greatest sacrifices for their convictions. But they were not of the steel of which conquerors are forged. The reason given by the ICP for its change of strategy was that assumption of power in the foreseeable future lay outside practical politics. But a suspicion arises that the ICP leaders avoided the supreme test because they did not trust themselves to be equal to it.

In 1917 Lenin had led his campaign with the cry, "All power to the Soviets—no participation of the bourgeoisie of any kind!" Conditions in Russia during the autumn of 1917 were no more favourable to the communists than those in Iraq during the spring of 1959, in some respects they were far worse. A comparison of Qassem to Kerensky, made in 1959, did not then appear foolish. It was the calibre of the communist leadership in Iraq that was at fault.

The report shows that the ICP was independent in its decisions. The errors were of its own making, and the lessons were drawn by its own members. If outside influence was exerted, the report reveals no sign of it. The Soviet Union was mentioned quite perfunctorily, considering the customary party style, and China not at all¹⁶. The focus of attention was the situation in Iraq, and, when convenient, ideological arguments were used to buttress the conclusions. That these conclusions suited Soviet policy is not immaterial, but this was not a primary consideration.

Since the errors which had harmed the party were the results of leftist offences against Marxist-Leninist principles, it is surprising at first sight that the condemnation of hypothetical heretics on the Right should be so much sharper than that of the actual sinners on the Left. This, however, can be attributed to the natural tendency of a professed revolutionary

¹⁶ The first abridgment of the Central Committee Report in *Itihād al-Sha'b*, Aug. 4, 1959, was extensively quoted in the Soviet press, without comment (e.g., *Pravda*, Aug. 17; *Kommunist*, No. 12, Aug. 1959, pp. 104–9). Later the full report was mentioned by Soviet writers with differing degrees of approval or doubt—a reasonable sign that it had not been Moscow-inspired.

This author has found no trace of a "Chinese wing" within the ICP in Qassem's time, the existence of which was sometimes alleged by Western writers. After Qassem's downfall the ICP came out against China in her quarrel with the Soviet Union (statement in *WMR*, December 1963, p. 60).

organization to be aggressive without inhibition towards supposed temporizers, while when dealing with extremists it is prone to slide into apologetics.

* * *

The history of Iraq from late summer of 1959 to February 9, 1963, indicates that Qassem interpreted the report along the lines noted here. The conclusion he drew was that the vaunted communist menace had proved to be a paper dragon. Moreover, he could infer that the ICP had forgone its freedom of action; the party course set in the report could not be revoked unless the "national government" changed its fundamental character beyond recognition. It was not a matter of principle or consistency; the tremendous drive the party had generated had deliberately been permitted to sputter out.

Qassem also evidently understood a further point that the communists had not grasped: the ferocious hatred born of fear, which the communists had engendered in the mind of the public at the height of their successes, would not disappear simply by the communist decision to call quits. This consideration also meant that Qassem would not be free to profit by his assumption that the communists would stand by him in any serious crisis and should not, therefore, be allowed to become overly weakened. He had to consider public opinion, and chiefly the attitude of the army and senior officials, who would exact revenge, and he would have difficulty to prevent excesses.

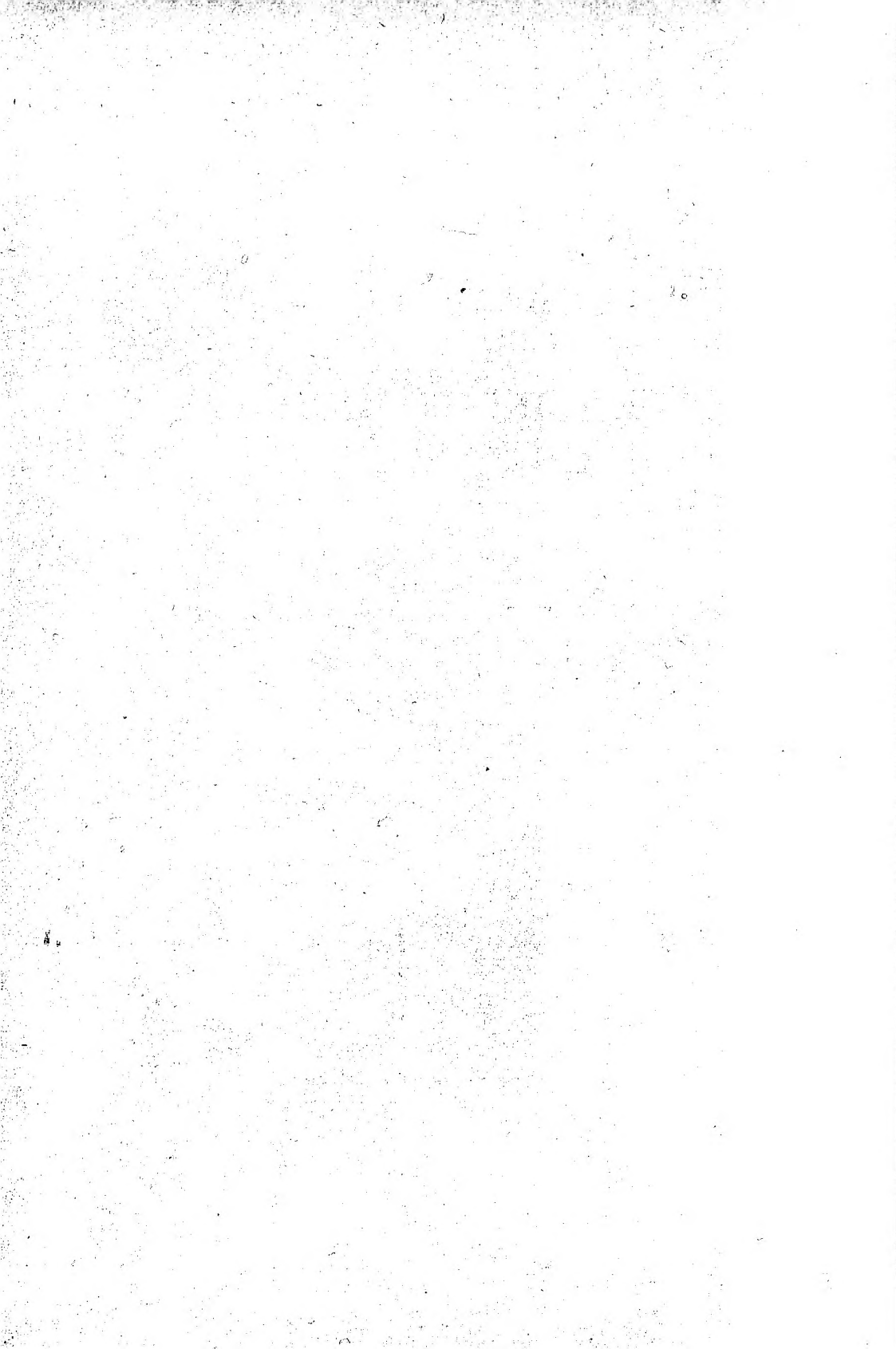
* * *

These assumptions of Qassem took time to mature into a definite policy. His first task, after the issue of the report, was to frustrate the expectations of the still powerful ICP that the licensing of parties would bring it recognition, freedom of action and ultimately power. He had to refrain from acting in a manner which appeared to denote that he either contemplated a plain breach of promise or a declaration of hostilities. Qassem had also to consider how his image as leader of the people could be best preserved. That his leadership was undisputed had been the prerequisite for the communist reassessment, so advantageous for him.

In attempting to solve these problems, Qassem encountered the challenge of constitutionalism which now, for the first time since the revolution, became the dominant factor in the political life of Iraq.

PART THREE

**THE CONSTITUTIONAL
CHALLENGE**



CHAPTER 18 IN ANTICIPATION OF PARTY ACTIVITY

Qassem's statement of mid-July 1959 that political parties would be licensed at a stated date introduced what may be termed the period of the constitutional challenge. The curtain fell towards the end of 1960, when the elimination of the last "political" members from the Cabinet finally dashed any hopes for devolution to constitutional government.

* * *

The five months from the communist retreat at the beginning of August 1959 to the promulgation of the Associations Law at the beginning of January 1960 were a time of confusion and changing tensions for which it is difficult to find a single denominator except that of mounting suspense in expectation of the new order.

Qassem had asserted himself and the communists had humbly knuckled down hoping for better times. They had to be kept in place, but not driven to desperation. The nationalists had to be disabused of any idea that the communists' discomfiture was their own chance. The Kurds—tribes and townspeople—had to be kept in good humour with a decent prospect of reward for their recent reliability. So had the moderates, which in political terms meant the NDP. The fiction—a compulsion with Qassem—of a united people rallying about its adored leader had to be maintained. And all this against a background of recent horrors which might return; of general disillusionment, distrust and irritation; of realization that an Agrarian Reform Law, industrial projects and social legislation had not solved the social problem.

Even without the shock of the attempt on his life on October 7 the continual strain might have caused Qassem to lose that calculating moderation which, underneath all his eccentricity, had characterized him so far. If these stresses are considered, it is surprising that a spell of irresponsibility which possessed Qassem towards the end of the year found expression in words rather than deeds. His mood then is best explained as shock reaction to the assassination attempt in October, and it is therefore described under that heading.

Government policy towards the communists during the latter part of 1959 was a combination of preventive action and laissez-faire.

Energetic measures were taken by the authorities to prove that Qassem was in earnest when he had promised that the "anarchist," i.e., communist, evildoers would not go unpunished. There was no pretence of forgetting the past. Among those detained for their part in the Mosul and Kirkuk atrocities were such prominent personalities as 'Abd al-Raḥmān al Qaṣṣāb and 'Adnān Shalmirān (see above, pp. 170, 175). The two military courts dealt out sentences to several hundreds of malefactors—clearly all communists, although the word was rarely applied—who were found guilty of offences ranging from murder to blasphemy and "incitement of peasants." A case which roused attention was that of Mundhir Abū al-'Īs, nephew of the ICP notable Muḥammad Ḥusayn Abū al-'Īs, who was sentenced to death on October 16 for a murder committed in July. Death sentences were common. However, not one communist was executed under Qassem, though often no formal reprieve was pronounced. There is evidence that Qassem regarded the condemned as a valuable pledge for communist good behaviour¹.

* * *

The Popular Resistance Force was put on ice. Although leading personalities of the regime stressed that it had not been disbanded, it remained completely inactivated until Qassem's downfall.

As a guiding principle it can be said that the ICP had established its hold over the trade unions and peasants movement by working downwards: first it had set up a national leadership, and then this leadership organized and developed infrastructures spreading in ever-increasing ramifications into the farthest corners of the country.

The government, in its sustained campaign from mid-1959 to wrest these movements from the communists, set out in the opposite direction. It promoted the constitution of anti-communist-led groups at grass-root level, which then ousted the communist leadership through ascending elections. The process was immaculately "democratic." It also was simple to manage in a society in which the authorities could manipulate elections as easily as in Iraq. Its principal condition of success was that the communists would accept defeat at each level; by mid-1959 it was permissible to assume that this condition would be met. However, there was

¹ See, e.g., an address of Qassem delivered on Aug. 13, 1959. (*R. Baghdad*, Aug. 13 [14], 1959).

preliminary work to be done: legislation had to be amended and public opinion prepared for the impending change; above all, both the self-confidence of the incumbent communist leadership and its hold on the organizations would have to be shaken. These preliminaries exercised government policy towards the trade-unions and peasants movement during the latter half of 1959.

Qassem's dealings with the General Federation of Trade Unions revealed an uncharacteristic measure of spite. His clash with the GFTU chairman Falāḥī at the founding congress on July 8 had angered Qassem and he would have nothing further to do with the movement so long as Falāḥī was at its head. But Qassem did not merely discriminate against personalities. At the end of July 'Abdī closed GFTU headquarters giving the reason that it was "in the public interest" and "because the federation had not applied for its licence under the law²." In response, on August 5 the movement issued a statement lauding Qassem in abject terms. It was signed not by the GFTU as such, but by the chairmen of about twenty unions. Foremost among the signatories was 'Alī Shukur, "chairman of the Union of Railway Workers," the vice-chairman of the federation³. This capitulation provides another telling instance of the ICP's readiness to offer any sacrifice, or swallow any insult at the hands of Qassem, in order not to jeopardize its chances of turning the expected constitutionalist revival to its own advantage.

Qassem exacted a price. The GFTU was left in abeyance for another three months, legally non-existent. Finally, in mid-November, the Minister of Social Affairs gave his approval of its constitution⁴. A delegation called on Qassem to express deep gratitude for the official recognition, and a statement was made asserting that the federation had no political aims—the very issue over which Falāḥī had foundered in early summer⁵. New elections were held on November 20, and Shukur emerged as chairman; 'Abd al-Qādir 'Ayyāsh, another communist, was elected secretary⁶. Falāḥī was not re-elected.

² *IS*, July 31, 1959; *R. Beirut*, Aug. 4—*IMB*, Aug. 5, 1959. *Ahālī*, Aug. 4, 1959, mentioned the "recent disintegration of social and vocational organizations" due to "mistakes committed by their leadership."

³ *R. Baghdad*, Aug. 5 [7], 1959.

⁴ *IT*, Nov. 15, 1959.

⁵ *R. Baghdad*, Nov. 12 [14], 1959; *R. Baghdad*, Nov. 24—*IMB*, Nov. 25, 1959.

⁶ *R. Baghdad*, Nov. 21 [23], 1959. 'Alī Shukur, according to a personal friend of his, was "the soul of decency and truth, modest and ready for any sacrifice, but not a born revolutionary"; this Falāḥī, on the same authority, was.

Although it was now an avowedly "non-political" organization, the federation was soon received into the communist World Federation of Trade Unions⁷.

The first congress of the GFTU convened at Baghdad from February 9-11, 1960, honoured with a colourless speech of welcome by Qassem. It elected its committees, communist throughout, with 'Alī Shukur as chairman. Falāḥī was returned as secretary for organizational affairs, an important function that was not too conspicuous⁸.

* * *

The reconciliation between the communists and national democrats within the leadership of the General Federation of Peasants Societies (see above, p. 217) did not endure.

Even while Qassem was restricting the action of the GFTU, *al-Aḥālī* reported a split among the peasants societies. "After difficulties with the Peasants Federation," it stated, "fourteen peasants societies have formed an association of their own in the south of Iraq⁹." Although Kāzīm Farḥūd, the communist chairman of the established general federation, immediately issued a statement promising approval of every peasants society "without the slightest regard for the political hue of the applicants¹⁰," the split widened beyond repair. The NDP members of the general federation committee ceased to attend meetings. The rival organizations competed in granting licenses to their respective societies. During August and the first half of September the official federation licensed about 2,000 peasants societies, and its rival 1,500. These figures give substance to the communist complaint that the NDP body was licensing societies already approved, with the connivance of the authorities¹¹. In law, there existed only one federation, the original organization under communist control; this state of affairs added piquancy to 'Abdī's proceedings against the Federation of Trade Unions for the neglect of certain registration requirements at that time.

The total membership of the General Federation of Peasants Societies at that time was stated to be "about 200,000¹²."

⁷ *IT*, Dec. 21, 1959.

⁸ *IT*, Feb. 10, 14, 1960.

⁹ *Aḥālī-Mid. Mir.*, Aug. 2, 1959.

¹⁰ *Iraqi Review*, Aug. 6, 1959.

¹¹ *IS*, Sept. 18, 1959.

¹² *IS*, April 15, 1960.

The chaos was partially dispelled by a new Peasants Societies Law of September 9, 1959. The postscript to the law explained that its purpose was "to correct the shortcomings which had appeared during the practical application" of the law of May 9, 1959 (see above, pp. 216-7)¹³. The main correction was, not surprisingly, that the licensing of peasants societies was taken out of the hands of the federation and entrusted instead to the provincial governors, from whose decisions appeal lay with the Minister of the Interior. The local societies thus constituted would then elect provincial representatives, and these in turn the committees of the general federation. By implication, the new law cast doubt on the legality of the existing federal bodies in toto until new elections by the properly licensed societies were held. Naturally, while the ICP reacted to the amendment with expressions of pain, it was warmly welcomed by the NDP. Now the position was reversed; it is easy to believe the complaint of the communist press that the authorities rejected out of hand every application from peasant groups which they considered were communist-led. By mid-December the number of societies licensed under the new law had reached 2,875; by mid-February 1960 it was 3,577¹⁴. A decision of the Department of Legal Drafting in January 1960 established that all previously existing societies were illegal unless they had notified the provincial governor of their existence within thirty days of the publication of the new law¹⁵. It thus weeded out the recalcitrants whose initial resentment had overcome their prudence. Most of the applications submitted for confirmation were refused. If reasons were given at all, it was usually stated that the signatories were not employed as peasants¹⁶.

The split in the federation was further publicized when the seceding movement called for a separate demonstration in Baghdad in honour of Qassem. The authorities granted 50 per cent reductions on the railway fares for all participants. The protests of Farḥūd and the communist press against the holding of the procession went unheeded. It took place on De-

¹³ *WI*, No. 225, Sept. 9, 1959, pp. 1-5. The anti-communist objective of the new law was stated in so many words in *Ahālī*, March 15, 1960.

¹⁴ *Ahālī-IT*, Dec. 14, 1959; *Zamān*, Feb. 14, 1960.

¹⁵ *Ahālī*, Jan. 20, 1960.

¹⁶ An interview by Kāzīm Farḥūd given to *Iraqi Review*, March 9, 1960, contains figures concerning the applications refused; they varied between 95 per cent and 100 per cent in the different provinces. The legal objection stated by the *mutaṣarrifs* was well chosen. As the promoters were generally ICP functionaries, they rarely earned their living by tilling the land. Farḥūd himself was a medical orderly.

ember 18; 500,000 peasants were said to have attended from all over Iraq, led by Zigam. Qassem greeted the crowd from the balcony of the Defence Ministry. This time there were no incidents to mar the proceedings.

The year closed with the apposite remark by the new daily *al-Mabda'* (see below, p. 270) that the fate of the Peasants Federation would "soon be determined"¹⁷. In reality, it had been determined already.

* * *

During the last four months of 1959 a number of professional and "national" organizations held their elections. They were conducted along disguised but perfectly recognizable party lines. There seems to have been little intimidation or grossly improper manipulation. If the results were not entirely consistent, this was in keeping with the confused state of public opinion.

On August 28, 1959, the Iraqi Bar Association elected its president. The candidates were 'Aziz Sharif, chairman of the Iraqi Peace Partisans and a communist; 'Abd al Razzāq Shabīb, formerly active in the Istiqlāl Party and a militant anti-communist; and Dr. Ḥasan Zakariyā, a leading NDP member. The results brought a landslide victory for the candidate of the Right: Shabīb polled 456 votes, Sharif 257, Zakariyā 165. As might have been foreseen, the communists did not accept their defeat lightly. The Iraqi delegation to the Arab Lawyers Conference in Beirut at the beginning of September was furiously divided against itself. Communist lawyers took part in communist-arranged processions in defiance of their association's ban. But the change was to be permanent.

It is worth asking what gave the nationalists their absolute majority at a time when the communists were still very strong, capable of winning similar contests with an easy margin, as other elections showed later in the year. First, the timing was a disadvantage to the communists. In August the public was still excited by the revelation that the communists were not merely murderers, but bungling murderers, who were being punished by the authorities; from October onwards this impression was counteracted for some time by the Ba'thi attempt on Qassem's life. Secondly, Shabīb was by all accounts a popular and trusted candidate beyond his political connections. On the other hand, Sharif, until the revolution an exile and a career politician since then, may well have appeared a dubious outsider even to colleagues who did not reject his party line. With their ingrained political acumen the Iraqi lawyers may also have decided that

¹⁷ *Mabda'*—IT, Dec. 20, 1959.

communism was finished, before other professional groups could do so. Their observation of developments at the military courts on the one hand and at Maḥdāwī's court on the other would amply substantiate this hunch.

On September 6–7 the first congress of the Journalists Association took place in Baghdad, attended by about two hundred members. It elected as chairman of the association Muḥammad Maḥdī al-Jawāhirī, a confirmed leftist, though not an ICP member¹⁸. The character of the press at that time made this result a foregone conclusion.

On December 11 yet another professional body, the Iraqi Economists Association, elected its committees. Two lists contended for the favour of 660 members, and 560 votes were cast. The United Democratic list received 381 votes, and the Professional list 179. The former represented the communists and their sympathizers, the latter "the non-communists, most of whom are Arab nationalists¹⁹."

The most important and widely publicized elections were held by the Students Federation, which on November 26 chose the delegates for the forthcoming annual conference. There were 63,000 votes cast—13,000 voters were students of Baghdad University and the remainder secondary school pupils²⁰. Three lists contested the elections: the United Democratic list which covered the communists, the Independents representing the NDP, and the United Students Front for the nationalists²¹. The communists won a signal victory with 75 per cent of the vote, the nationalists polled a considerable minority with 22.5 per cent, and the National Democrats arrived nowhere with 2.5 per cent²². A communist comment on the results indicates that they had thought to fare far worse²³. An observer will note the utter weakness of the case for liberalism among the young.

* * *

On August 22 an ordinance was published reorganizing the Ministry of Guidance²⁴. It provided for the establishment of an official *Iraq News*

¹⁸ *Ḥayāt*, Sept. 27, 1959.

¹⁹ *Ḥayāt*, Dec. 12, 1959; *IT*, Dec. 13, 1959.

²⁰ *IT*, Nov. 27, 1959. Iraqi "secondary schools" correspond to the last two pre-university school years.

²¹ *IS*, Nov. 26, 1959, identified the lists when it exhorted the students to vote for the United Democrats, regretted that the Independents had declined to co-operate with the former list, and pilloried the forces of reaction which were hiding behind the United Students Front.

²² *IT*, Nov. 29, 1959.

²³ *IS*, Nov. 29, 1959.

²⁴ *WI*, No. 214, Aug. 22, 1959, pp. 1–3.

Agency. Of greater interest politically was the abolition of the directorate-general of Guidance and Broadcasting, and the formation in its stead of two directorates-general—one of Guidance and Press, and the other of Broadcasting and Television. Dhanūn Ayyūb, the Director-General of Guidance and Broadcasting, took over the latter department, and a career official without a political background was appointed to the former. The obvious demotion of Ayyūb was another communist loss of face.

On September 2, 1959, almost on the eve of the journalists conference, ‘Abdī issued a proclamation “to the newspaper- and magazine-owners.” It was bound to dispel any misunderstandings that might have been engendered by Qassem’s frequent references to the liberty of the press²⁵.

The proclamation invoked the Martial Law Ordinance of 1935 (see above, pp. 38–9) and Nuri’s Press Ordinance of 1954, which boded ill for a beginning. Besides banning the offending publication the law imposed a maximum term of three years’ imprisonment on those responsible or a fine of ID 150 for publishing reports or commentaries inciting persons to disturbances, setting the people against the regime, encouraging the commission of crimes, exhorting to civil disobedience, “creating malice . . . exclusive of criticism soundly and scientifically substantiated,” deriding religion, defaming individuals, influencing public opinion in matters *sub judice*, disseminating false news or photostatic copies of forged documents, offending members of official and semi-official bodies over matters concerning the performance of their duties, or disclosing news of the armed forces of a classified nature.

In extenuation of this astonishing list it must be said that no offence is mentioned of which Iraqi newspapers had not been gravely guilty during the past year. Moreover, the future was to show that the Military Governor General made sparing use of his powers under this proclamation. As often under Qassem, the government in reality was more easy-going than existing regulations would imply.

The communist and para-communist press as yet met no specific interference, apart from receiving their share of admonitions to abstain from “inciting frenzied hostilities among a united people²⁶.” On their part the communist journals never wavered from the policy which had been foretraced by the Central Committee Report. They might inform the government of shortcomings; they might advise and warn; they might point in agonized terms to injuries and injustices. They were never disrespect-

²⁵ *Bilād*, Sept. 3; *R. Baghdad*, Sept. 2 [4], 1959.

²⁶ *R. Baghdad*, Aug. 7 [10], 1959.

ful; they never threatened; they never hinted that their loyalty to the regime was in question.

The nationalist newspapers, so recently revived, fared ill during this period. *Al-Fajr al-Jadīd*, *Baghdād*, *al-Hurriya*, and two newcomers—*al-Sharq* and *al-Hiyāḍ*—were all closed down on 'Abdī's orders; some were permitted to reappear and then were closed again, until by the end of the year none were issued. Often a newspaper was closed down for disregarding directions issued by the Military Governor General to abstain from publishing some particular anti-communist scurrility. None of the journals had attacked the regime as such.

Baghdad Radio had left the communist orbit for good, although it remained under the direction of Kāzīm al-Samāwī. A proclamation of neutrality, or of cooperation "with every loyal group," was made by the director on August 16, 1959²⁷. *Ittiḥād al-Sha'b* was excluded from the radio's press review for a while, but when political developments again brought the nationalist danger to the fore, the ICP organ was restored to its former prominence.

* * *

In December the communists lost what had been an important position of influence when all censorship was transferred from the charge of the military authorities to a newly established Censorship Board at the Ministry of Guidance. Col. Luṭfī Ṭāhīr's disappearance was a blow to communist prestige in the world of journalism, and again cut off one means of achieving an unobtrusive communist comeback.

The National Democratic Party, although officially inactive, now showed more political vitality than at any other period under Qassem. In the present climate there was a role for a political force which was, as yet, basically friendly to the regime and also willing to cooperate in the foremost task of the hour—reduction of the communists to size with a minimum of publicity. The NDP was well fitted for the part. The official ban on party activities hampered it little, as its grass-root organization had always been weak relative to its intellectual leadership²⁸. This had recently been purged of its pro-communist wing (see above, pp. 208–9). Chaderchi, whose *Front Populaire* ideology would certainly have disapproved of his party's policy in the second half of 1959 and whose prestige might have wrecked

²⁷ *R. Baghdad*, Aug. 16 [18], 1959.

²⁸ Despite the NDP's success with the peasants movement. For an examination of this matter, see below, pp. 284–5.

it, was abroad until September 20; even after his return his health remained impaired and he soon resigned the active chairmanship of the NDP to a committee headed by Ḥadīd²⁹. Thus the actual policy-makers of the party were Ḥadīd and Ḥmūd. These two were Cabinet members in charge of key departments, on good personal terms with Qassem, less theoreticians than men of affairs with large stakes in the country's economy. Most important, the last year had turned them into determined anti-communists.

The sustained and effective campaign of the NDP against communist domination of the peasants movement has been described. So has its attempt to establish itself as a third force at various elections, no less serious for being a failure. *Al-Ahālī*, the party organ, maintained a vigorous and constructively critical course, advocating moderation and controlled progress; it was by and large anti-communist and pro-government, but far removed from expressing the hysterics and sycophancy of its other anti-communist and pro-government contemporaries, like the renegade *al-Thawra*. The hopes and fears of the NDP on the eve of the Associations Law, all cogently expressed in *al-Ahālī*, are presented in their context below.

* * *

Towards the end of 1959 a legislative step was taken at the personal instance of Qassem which intimately concerned every citizen. This was the Personal Status Law, the first of its kind in Iraq³⁰. The new law modernized a number of traditional Muslim concepts concerning marriage and divorce; it stipulated a minimum age of eighteen years for marriage, which in special cases might be reduced to sixteen. Polygamy was prohibited on pain of imprisonment, unless especially permitted by a *qāḍī* for reasons laid down in the law. The wife's protection against arbitrary divorce was greatly increased. Female descendants were accorded equal rights with males in matters of intestate succession. This last precept was not stated in the law in so many words but implied in the phrasing which made the principles of the Civil Code of 1951, applying only to the inheritance of *mirī* lands, govern the identity and share of heirs. Most significant as a revelation of Qassem's political credo, the Personal Status Law applied to both Sunnis and Shi'is³¹.

²⁹ Affirmed by Chaderchi in *Ahālī*, April 28, 1960.

³⁰ *WI*, No. 280, Dec. 30, 1959, pp. 1-8.

³¹ For detailed analyses of the Personal Status Law, see Linant de Bellefonds, Y., "Le code du statut personnel irakien du 30 Decembre 1959", *Studia Islamica*, XIII, 1960, pp. 79-139; Anderson, J.N.D., "A Law of Personal Status for Iraq", *International and Comparative Law Quarterly*, IX, 1960, pp. 542-63.

Unfortunately, the law did more honour to Qassem's Western-style "progressiveness" than to his political acumen. The communists were not likely to be impressed by "bourgeois reform," nor the nationalists mollified by social advances with which they might agree but in which they were not primarily interested. The NDP and sympathizers, who might have been expected to welcome this legislation enthusiastically, were actually piqued that no consultations had been held outside the narrow professional circles associated with the ministries in question³². The religious sector was deeply disturbed. A delegation of '*ulamā*' who remonstrated with Qassem were apprised that the Koranic injunction favouring sons in matters of inheritance said, "I advise you," and not "I order you." The encounter was unlikely to reinforce the visitors' support of the regime³³. Their resentment continued to rankle and caused the repeal of the law after Qassem's downfall.

Qassem also directly censured the '*ulamā*'. Islam, Qassem reiterated, indeed "is clear, strong and chaste." But he no longer associated its teachers with this praise. He gave instances of foolishness and perfidy which, it seems, he regarded as typical rather than exceptional; at any rate he said nothing to counteract such an impression³⁴. A strange incident had helped to sour relations with Qassem. On October 22 the pro-communist dailies *al-Bilād* and *al-Akhbār* had published what purported to be a legal opinion signed by five leading Shi'i '*ulamā*' headed by Muḥsin al-Ḥakīm, which attacked Abdel Nasser for subverting religion and promoting "freemasonry." The five promptly denounced the *fatwā* as a forgery. The Iraqi regime as such did not figure in the incident, but the '*ulamā*' must have known that Qassem would take their denial of a censure of Abdel Nasser as a declaration of disloyalty to himself.

* * *

At the beginning of August, just before the proceedings at Mahdāwī's court were to get out of hand, Qassem had reinstated into the service nineteen nationalist officers who had been pensioned off after the Shawwāf revolt. Their names—although not the officers in person—had appeared during the subsequent trials. The best known were Col. 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Rāwī and Lt.-Col. 'Arif 'Abd al-Razzāq, both prominent Free Officers

³² *Ahālī*, Dec. 14, 1959.

³³ According to an interview with Qassem in *Thawra*, March 7, 1960, extensively quoted in Anderson, op. cit., pp. 562-3.

³⁴ *R. Baghdad*, Dec. 2 [4], 1959.

before the revolution. Also rehabilitated was Aref's intimate, Col. 'Abd al-Laṭīf al-Darrājī. He indeed was too dangerous to be returned to the army but was kicked upstairs and appointed governor of Kut Province. The region had a Shi'i population and was well away from the Syrian frontier³⁵.

The reinstated officers were reported to have sent Qassem a fervent message of thanks and support. A number of the prominent civilians who had been released from custody were less forgiving. Jābir 'Umar, 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Bazzāz, Shaykh Mahmūd al-Ṣawwāf, 'Adnān al-Rāwī and Nājī Ṭālib escaped in the autumn to Syria. Once there, all—with the exception of Ṭālib—joined Sāmarrā'i's Nationalist Rally and spewed out poisoned propaganda against the "Red"—or "Mad"—Dictator at Baghdad.

Mahdāwī's court was now entering yet another phase—the stage between the communist retreat and the attempt on Qassem's life—and was very much affected by the change in the political atmosphere. On August 12 the court convened to hold its thirty-first trial, the sixth and last dealing with charges arising out of the Shawwāf revolt. The greatest names had been spared until now—Maj.-Gen. Ḥusayn al-'Umārī, a retired officer appointed after the revolution governor of Kut Province, Brigadiers Ṭabaqchalī and 'Uqaylī, and Col. Rif'at al-Ḥājī Sirrī; with them were arraigned six less prominent officers and one Mosul civilian.

Matters went wrong for the court from the start. The first two witnesses for the prosecution retracted their evidence given before the examining magistrates, alleging that it had been extorted by torture. The third prosecution witness gave Ṭabaqchalī a glowing character as "a sincere Free Officer." Disaster followed when in the course of his evidence the fourth prosecution witness, Lt.-Col. Yūnis Bāsh, told Mahdāwī that he was sure that if Mahdāwī had seen the torture applied during the preliminary investigation, he would have punished the investigators. The deepest cunning could not have been as effective as this complaint, which in all probability was just a forlorn attempt to propitiate Mahdāwī by flattery. Mahdāwī was evidently pleased by the appeal to his sense of justice. He replied: "This thing has become well known to everyone; I have asked the Sole Leader to take the necessary measures³⁶."

The blunder once committed could not be undone. After Mahdāwī's explicit admission that his examining magistrates had used torture, his court could never, and would never, be the same, although Mahdāwī, Amīn and the claue did their best to pretend that nothing had changed. They abused, jeered, cheered, declaimed; Bāsh was transferred from the witness

³⁵ All three officers played a prominent role in Qassem's overthrow.

³⁶ *Protocols*, XVIII, p. 43.

stand into the dock. Qassem was sufficiently uneasy to abandon his pose of detachment and issue an unprecedented declaration of faith in Mahdāwī³⁷. But the stance had been demolished. One accused after the other denied in toto all that had been admitted during investigation, including much that was demonstrably true, claiming he had been under duress. The prisoners demanded their rights of defence. They shouted down the prosecutor in chorus. Ṭabaqchalī in particular, in a dignified but energetic fashion, claimed that he had at all times maintained the principles of the revolution against the forces of communism, atheism and anarchy; as far as possible he sidestepped the question of his loyalty to Qassem. Ṭabaqchalī was much the most impressive personality in court and made both Mahdāwī and Amīn appear the second-rate characters they really were.

There was a bloody ending. While the trial of Ṭabaqchalī and his associates was still in progress, the execution took place in Baghdad on August 25 of five junior officers and one civilian who had been arraigned at an earlier trial and sentenced six days before. On September 16 the thirty-first trial terminated, with sentences of death for Ṭabaqchalī, Sirrī and two other officers³⁸. At dawn on September 20 these four, together with nine other officers who had been sentenced at an earlier date for their part in the Shawwāf revolt, were shot at Umm Ṭbūl range. Two hours earlier four personages of the monarchy had been hanged in Baghdad prison: Sa'īd Qazzāz, Nuri's Minister of the Interior; Bahjat al-'Aṭiyya, his director of public security; 'Abd al-Jabbār Fahmī, former governor of Baghdad Province; and 'Abd al-Jabbār Ayyūb, former director of the Baghdad prison for political offenders. The first three had been sentenced on February 4, and Ayyūb on April 6.

That same day Mahdāwī and Amīn departed by air for China on an extended visit.

That the communist and leftist press in Baghdad would jubilantly welcome the executions was predictable; so were the frenzy in Cairo and Damascus and the mournful indignation in Amman over the fate of the Hashimite servants.

What Qassem may not have foreseen was that the executions deeply stirred feelings in wide circles of the Iraqi public, including persons who had no direct political stake in the matter; again Ṭabaqchalī's personal reputation made its impact. The nationalists in their geographical concentrations were emboldened to hold demonstrations on September 20–21 which were mainly funeral processions carrying empty coffins and fol-

³⁷ *R. Baghdad*, Aug. 13 [14], 1959.

³⁸ 'Umarī and 'Uqaylī were acquitted.

lowed by wailing crowds; but slogans decrying Maḥdāwī and even Qassem were also chanted. The security forces behaved with restraint and generally did not resort to violence when preventing the demonstrators from crossing into "communist areas." It was, no doubt, a reasonable policy in the circumstances.

Hitherto Qassem had shown himself averse to judicial killings, as afterwards he was to do again. Why then did he order these executions now? The simplest reason must be that Qassem was convinced that the condemned were implacably hostile to him and that they were too dangerous to live. It is likely that there were additional motives: gossip related that Qassem had intended to pardon Ṭabaqchalī, but signed the execution decree in a fit of rage when he saw the panegyrics devoted to the prisoner by *Ṣawt al-'Arab*. Shortly before September 20 an Egyptian agency had reported that Qassem ordered the shooting of Ṭabaqchalī because he was jealous of the esteem which the latter had gained among the people during the trial³⁹. This is quite possible. To preserve perspective it must also be remembered that under the harsh conventions of martial law many more of the prisoners might have been sentenced to death for their part in the revolt; of those actually so sentenced, seven were reprieved before the executions. Qazzāz and his associates, on the other hand, were undoubtedly sacrificed to prove that Qassem could be as ruthless towards "reactionaries" as to "traitors" among the Free Officers.

At one time Qassem took steps to follow up the allegations of torture which had so excited Maḥdāwī's court. As early as July it was rumoured that certain investigating magistrates of the court had been dismissed. At the beginning of September a source close to Qassem reported that four of the magistrates—all of them communists—would be referred to a committee of civil and *sharī'a* judges on a charge of torturing detainees⁴⁰. The appointment of men of religion must have been particularly humiliating to the ICP and gratifying to conservative opinion. However, at the end of November it became known that the proceedings had been called off⁴¹.

* * *

Qassem's promise to legalize party life at the beginning of 1960 had been an important factor in the ICP's decision not to risk a showdown with

³⁹ *MENA*, Sept. 9 [11], 1959.

⁴⁰ *Thawra*, Sept. 9—*Mid. Mir.*, Sept. 13, 1959.

⁴¹ *Ḥayāt*, Nov. 24, 1959.

the regime at a time when the communists were generally considered the foremost power in the land. It was natural that as the fulfilment drew near, public expectation should mount rapidly.

There could be no doubt that Qassem would not retract his promise. Apart from the innate difficulties and dangers of such a course there were assurances from Qassem throughout the second half of 1959 that he would honour his pledge. It is said that he repeated his intention on unpublicized occasions: the ICP leadership sent 'Abd al Qādir Ismā'il to visit Qassem and received an explicit assurance that "the Iraqi Communist Party" would be legalized at the beginning of 1960⁴².

* * *

The discussion took a new turn in the second half of October, when *al-Thawra* put forward the suggestion that Qassem should head a political party of his own, once the transitional period came to a close⁴³. Since Yūnis al-Ṭā'ī, the owner of the daily, was in close personal contact with Qassem there are grounds for believing that the idea was a kite first flown by Qassem himself; this, at any rate, was the opinion of well-informed observers. If so, the testing left him in no doubt of public reaction. A fortnight's energetic canvassing by *al-Thawra* elicited support from a number of non-political personalities and a few high-ranking army officers. But wherever it reflected the influence of the ICP and the NDP, the press was outspoken in disapproval. A single-party system was the negation of democracy; it was un-Iraqi; it was inconceivable that the Leader in his wisdom should really wish to imitate the worst feature of the UAR regime with its abominable and ridiculous National Union⁴⁴.

Qassem was soon convinced of the impracticability of the scheme. On November 13 the pro-communist *al-Ra'y al-Āmm* quoted "an undisputed authentic and reliable source who is, due to his important post, very close to the beloved Leader." The source asserted that Qassem had never thought of founding a party of his own; first, because he believed in multiple political expression, and secondly, because he was above parties. This put an end to the matter.

* * *

⁴² Private information.

⁴³ *Thawra*, Oct. 19, 20, 1959.

⁴⁴ *Ahālī—IT*, Nov. 11, 1959; *Ṣawt al-Ahrār—IT*, Nov. 8, 1959; *Bilād—IT*, Nov. 12, 1959; *IS—IT*, Nov. 12, 1959.

With the nightmare of a Qassem party relieved, the Left returned to its review of general aspects of the new era, especially of the anticipated law which would shape its course.

During December a series of articles in *Itiḥād al-Sha'b* advised on the principles which should underlie government policy. "The central point of the [future associations] law," the newspaper pronounced, should be the "absolute and total" denial of freedom to engage in political activity to "the enemies of the people . . . the agents of imperialism, the feudalists, the members of the former regime, the plotters, the agents of the avaricious people and everyone else disloyal to the republican regime and its democratic policy." On the other hand, "government officials, students," and above all, the army should be permitted to engage in party life, for "party life is a school for patriotism and a mirror for patriotic forces and political trends."

Care must be taken "to seal any loopholes through which interference in the internal affairs of parties" might be exercised. The formation of branches, the constitution of committees and the dissolution of the party itself "except in the event of treason" were expressly mentioned as matters which the law should exclude from the concern of the authorities.

The Permanent Constitution was evoked. Its drafting was not to be viewed as a purely legal matter or as the concern of the various ministries, but as "a political and social issue of supreme importance"; its authors, therefore, should be "genuine revolutionaries."

Al-Aḥālī's review of the theme did not draw practical conclusions greatly different from those of the ICP organ. However it did not propose sweeping restrictions on the rights of arbitrarily defined "anti-republican elements," and voiced no demand for the politicization of army and officialdom⁴⁵. Since the NDP, unlike the communists, genuinely regarded constitutionalism as an end in itself, not as a means towards the acquisition of power, these reflections of the party organ were on a different plane of political morality; but they shared with the ICP their unrealistic view of Qassem's mentality, intentions and strategy.

⁴⁵ *Aḥālī*, Dec. 22, 1959.

CHAPTER 19 THE ATTEMPT ON QASSEM'S LIFE

With the failure of the Shawwāf revolt the Ba'th leaders went into hiding. All overt activity had become inconceivable. Even the tentative contacts and schemings with malcontents of various descriptions which had characterized the Ba'th proceedings in the previous six months were impossible in the atmosphere of capitulation or fear which had settled on the anti-communist sectors of the public. Thus Qassem's murder had actually become *al-ḥall al-awḥad*¹, "the only solution," and towards this consummation the Ba'th regional command bent itself before March 1959 was over.

The outlines were soon settled. Qassem was to be buried under a hail of automatic fire and hand grenades while he passed in his car through Rashid Street between his residence at 'Alwiyya in the south of Baghdad and his office in the Ministry of Defence, in the centre of the city on the left bank. The actual spot was fixed at Ra's al-Qarya, where Rashid Street narrowed down and a maze of adjoining lanes offered good opportunities for flight. An executive committee was formed composed of Fu'ād al-Rikābī, 'Abdallah al-Rikābī, Ayād Sa'īd Thābit and Khālīd 'Alī al-Dulaymī, all members of the Ba'th regional command. The operational responsibility was in the hands of Thābit. Planning and organization proceeded briskly. Arms and ammunition were obtained, apparently from professional gun-runners inside Iraq, never a difficult task; observation posts were prepared at Ra's al-Qarya and along the route from 'Alwiyya to the Ministry of Defence, and a communication code was established. Weapons drill was practised at an improvised base near Musaiyib. The services of a surgeon were procured. At the beginning of June preparations were judged ready for the stroke.

Then, and only then, according to Fu'ād al-Rikābī, it occurred to the committee that "assassination for the sake of assassination" was unsatis-

¹ Rikābī. Another important source is *Protocols*, XX-XXII.

factory; it might hand over Iraq on a platter to the communists. The regional command voted to postpone the design, pending satisfactory arrangements for a successor regime.

At the end of July the Ba'th regional command had consolidated its reassessment of the situation, and proceeded to place the project for the elimination of Qassem on "a broad basis." The original assassination plan was allowed to stand, including the volunteers assigned to its execution; only one of them was excluded, apparently for disciplinary reasons. Ties were established with Free Officers and other non-Ba'thi nationalist circles. Maj. Ṣālīḥ Maḥdī 'Ammāsh, just released from detention and restored to active service, served for liaison with the army. Shanshal promised his financial support—he had no other to offer, the Istiqlāl party being dead for all practical purposes. The greatest coup was undoubtedly the acquisition of Lt.-Gen. Najīb al-Rubay'ī, as president of the Sovereignty Council the constitutional head of state. His anti-communist inclinations were known, and he had a record of—ineffectual—remonstrances with Qassem on this issue. So the regional command decided to take the risk and try to engage his cooperation. He was approached at Rikābī's request by a personal friend of his, Shukrī Ṣālīḥ Zakī, a leading non-Ba'thi member of the shadowy Nationalist Front (see above, p. 148). Rubay'ī's response was "enthusiastic," according to Rikābī. He would move into the Defence Ministry "dressed in his uniform"—he ordinarily wore civilian clothes—as soon as Qassem had been killed; then he would address the nation over the radio and thus smooth the way for the new nationalist regime. Contacts were then established with Broadcasting House to prevent any hitch that might arise there.

As to the nature of the coming regime it was agreed between the Ba'th, the Free Officers and the other nationalist circles that a revolutionary command would take over the reins of government and set up a Cabinet of its own members and of coopted persons. The names of such perennials as Nāḥjī Ṭālib, 'Abd al-Laṭīf Darrājī and Fu'ād 'Arīf—the last a minister in Qassem's present government—were mentioned. It is safe to assume that the members of the Ba'th regional command, leading Free Officers like Ṭāḥir Yaḥyā and Aḥmad al-Bakr, and non-Ba'th nationalists like Ṣubḥī 'Abd al-Ḥamid and Shukrī Ṣālīḥ Zakī, were provided for. The accession of Iraq to the UAR was not planned, at least not immediately. This had been a condition Rubay'ī put for his cooperation.

Contacts with the UAR authorities had already been established during the first stage of the project, before June. They were now extended, with Tawfiq 'Abāza, second secretary at the depleted UAR Embassy in Baghdad, as a go-between. Moreover, Rikābī himself tells of communicating with

the Ba'th national command, the pro-Nasser faction of which was sure to report to Cairo.

By the end of September preparations for the enlarged action were again complete. On Wednesday, October 7, action stations were manned and communications personnel alerted, with 'Ammāsh at the Ministry of Defence to give the green light. At 6.30 pm, when Qassem passed Ra's al-Qarya on his way from the Ministry to a reception at the East-German Mission near al-Bāb al-Sharqī, his car was showered with hand-grenades and automatic fire from submachine guns. The chauffeur was killed; Maj. Qāsim al-Jānābī, Qassem's aide, was seriously wounded. Qassem was hit in the left shoulder and rushed by a taxi driver to Dār-al-Salām Hospital. His injury proved more serious than was first supposed, and he stayed there until the beginning of December. One of the assailants, 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Gharīrī, was killed by the fire of his comrades—not by Qassem, as Qassem himself claimed²—and left behind on the road.

The rest of the undertaking fell flat. Rubay'ī is said to have arrived at the Defence Ministry—in full uniform—in the belief that Qassem was dead, and upon being undeceived was reduced to maintaining that he had come to prevent a communist coup. Some of the Free Officers asked 'Abdī to join them in taking over the government. 'Abdī flatly refused, and threatened them if they dared to move, although he does not seem to have taken measures against them³. Qassem's survival, combined with 'Abdī's loyalty, the alertness of the Twenty-fifth Brigade in Baghdad under its commander Brig. Ismā'īl 'Ārif, and the communist-led mass demonstrations which soon filled the streets, paralysed the military conspirators who should have taken over from their Ba'thi civilian brethren. The plot had failed.

* * *

With so many people in the secret, how was it possible that some intelligence concerning the plot should not have reached the authorities? The answer is that it did. By the time of the attempt Qassem's security services had a good general idea of the plan, except knowledge of the place, which was really confined to the actual participants, and of the time, which, in the nature of the undertaking, depended on Qassem's movements. But

² *R. Baghdad*, Oct. 28 [30], 1959.

³ Rikābī, *op. cit.*, p. 86. The relevant sentences leave unclear whether 'Abdī was approached shortly before the attempt on Qassem or immediately afterwards; the context makes the latter alternative the more likely.

whatever was known should have sufficed to block the attempt by indirect security measures, if not by the arrest of the conspirators. Nothing was done. Qassem's assertion afterwards that he knew what was coming, but that he trusted in Providence, seems to be the truth⁴.

* * *

While the Ba'th regional command pursued its grand design, a parallel plot to assassinate Qassem was evolved by Col. Midḥat al-Ḥājī Sirrī. He was actuated by the wish to avenge his brother Rif'at, recently executed for his part in the Shawwāf mutiny. Midḥat's associates were Fayṣal Ḥabīb al-Khayzarān, a prominent Ba'thi who was playing a lone hand in this matter apparently to spite the party leadership, and Kāẓim al-'Azzāwī, another Ba'thi. The two groups were essentially independent, with some points of contact, but they had established no tactical cooperation.

The failure of the "official" plot put a stop to Midḥat's undertaking as well, because of threads which led from one to the other. The Midḥat plot gains additional interest by its association with a British subject of Jamaican extraction, Leslie Marsh, a motor car dealer living in Baghdad. 'Azzāwī's close connection with Marsh—a friendship unusual between an Iraqi and a Westerner in the Baghdad society of 1959—led to the latter's detention and interrogation before Maḥdāwī. 'Azzāwī asserted in open court that Marsh was a "spy" and that he himself had been in his pay, but he denied that Marsh had had any knowledge of the plot against Qassem's life. Marsh denied everything. Maḥdāwī, in his element, blessed the day that he was sitting in judgment over a British spy—although technically he was not trying Marsh at all; at a later date Maḥdāwī blamed the British Embassy for inspiring the plot. In May 1960 Marsh was quietly returned to Britain, just before the trial of his associates started before Maḥdāwī.

'Azzāwī's statement probably summed up Marsh's position. Marsh was indeed, in all likelihood, a "British spy" or put it less flamboyantly, engaged in collecting out-of-the-way information for the British Embassy; 'Azzāwī was among his "sources." On the other hand it is highly unlikely that Marsh had any knowledge of the plot against Qassem. 'Azzāwī, who was himself involved, would not have put his life into the hands of his alien part-time employer. Moreover, the British Foreign Office would surely not have covered up information it received on the intended murder of a head of government, unless there was a compelling reason to do so. There was no such reason at the end of 1959. Qassem so far had not shown

⁴ *R. Baghdad*, Oct. 28 [30], 1959.

himself particularly hostile to British interests; Britain had nothing to expect from a pro-UAR regime in Iraq; and if the London *Times* may be accepted as an indicator of Foreign Office opinion, British diplomacy had taken a very level-headed view of the "communist peril" in Iraq all along.

* * *

For the first few days after the attempt on Qassem's life the Ba'th regional command intended to sit out the storm in order to maintain its underground organization intact. Its hope that the authorities would find no clues to the identity of the assailants appears rather absurd after Gharīrī's corpse had been left in the street. The early arrest of Kāzīm al-'Azzāwī, who proved cooperative with the investigating magistrates, made the Ba'th leadership change its mind. An exodus to Syria began, although not before principals in the conspiracy like Thābit and Dulaymī had been caught. Fu'ād al-Rikābī himself did not flee until November 14, after he had become convinced that Qassem "knew all." His journey by car across the desert to Syria passed without hitch; a fellow-Ba'thi, Capt. Mundhir al-Wandāwī, steered him past the military posts between Baghdad and Falluja. But it was an abdication all the same, as Rikābī seems to have guessed himself. He had evacuated his place at the top, never to recover it.

Among other prominent Ba'this who made good their escape during these weeks were 'Abdallah al-Rikābī and Fayṣal Ḥabīb al-Khayzarān. Midḥat al-Ḥājj Sirrī also got away.

Tawfiq 'Abāza was expelled from Iraq on November 2.

* * *

The trial of the plotters against Qassem's life started in Mahdāwī's court on December 26, 1959. There were seventy-eight accused, twenty-one of whom were absconded "fugitives." All were civilians, excepting Col. Midḥat al-Ḥājj Sirrī, a subaltern CID officer and two soldiers. Evidently at the time of the opening the authorities had not learned to differentiate between Rikābī's and Sirrī's plots. Kāzīm al-'Azzāwī and Sirrī were eventually bracketed out of the proceedings and figured at a trial of their own (see below). Those implicated in the conspiracy in an indirect way, from Rubay'ī and Shanshal downwards, were kept out of the dock and, so far as a decision lay with the court, out of the proceedings. Their exclusion must have been expressly ordered by Qassem. When 'Azzāwī gave an embarrassingly clear exposition of Rubay'ī's role, Mahdāwī—after a day's delay, obviously for consultation with Qassem—roundly abused both him

and "imperialism" for trying to sow dissension among the faithful sons of the republic⁵.

In atmosphere the proceedings resembled the Ṭabaqchalī trials of the preceding summer, although significantly the communist clique had all but disappeared. Maḥdāwī did his best to uphold his ascendancy in his old manner, but the decline in his prestige since spring was marked. Several of the accused, particularly from among the members of the assault group who felt, perhaps, that they had nothing to lose, were staunch to the point of impertinence. They were joined in this respect by Yusrā Thābit, Ayād's pretty sister. Yusrā was a fanatical Ba'thi, whom the UAR propaganda had been building into an Iraqi counterpart of the Algerian freedom-fighter Jamila Bouhared ever since her first detention by the PRF in 1959. Others turned state's evidence and threw themselves on the mercy of the court.

Judgment was passed on February 25, 1960. Six of the accused before the court were sentenced to death, besides eleven of the fugitives. Many were sentenced to varying terms of imprisonment, a few were acquitted. In sum, these were not ferocious awards in the world of Iraqi politics. Among the acquitted was Yusrā Thābit—either because she was not guilty or because Qassem did not wish to enhance her popularity.

None of the death sentences were carried out. On March 26 Qassem signed an order fixing the executions for 4 a.m. on March 31. That same March 26 a Republican Decree ordered the execution of the young communist Mundhir Abū al-ʿĪs, sentenced to death by a military court five months earlier (see above, p. 238). Then, shortly after midnight in the early hours of March 31, Qassem made an unheralded appearance over radio and television during which he announced that all executions had been "postponed," "so that this may be a moral for those who learn from morals." He took pains to make his decision plausible. He himself had waived his "personal right" against his would-be killers all along, and only regard for the common weal and his murdered chauffeur's memory had made him agree to the death sentences in the first place. Moreover, it was ʿĪd al-Fiṭr, and, he added, "we are all of us in the hands of God"; "if their end comes, they cannot retard or advance it by an hour⁶."

What considerations lay behind this announcement, in human terms the most dramatic that Qassem ever made? High personalities, prominent among them the President of Lebanon, had urgently interceded for the

⁵ *IT*, Feb. 1, 1960.

⁶ *IT*, April 4, 1959. The "postponement" of the sentences was followed by a conditional pardon in May (*IT*, May 29, 1960). ʿĪd al-Fiṭr marks the end of Ramaḍān.

lives of the young Ba'this. The ICP had made frantic efforts on behalf of Muḥammad Ḥusayn Abū al-'Īs, a member of its central committee, to save his brother's son, including the holding of mass processions on March 30 in front of the Ministry of Defence. In addition, the executions of August-September 1959 had not solved anything. The Ba'this could hardly be reprieved without the communist, or the reverse. Yet whatever the rational calculations underlying Qassem's decision, at bottom one must not ignore the lack of vindictiveness and the regard for human life which were traits in the complex character of 'Abd al-Karīm Qassem.

This combination of *Realpolitik* with emotional generosity is in all probability also the key to Qassem's connivance—astonishing at first sight—at Rubay'ī's treachery. But it would have reflected no honour on Qassem to admit by way of a public trial that the president of the Sovereignty Council had intrigued to have the Leader removed by assassination; Rubay'ī on his own was no power at all and the fright he had been through would make him all the more pliable in the future.

The trials of Midḥat al-Ḥājj Sirrī—in *absentia*—and Kāzīm al-'Azzāwī for "espionage and plotting to assassinate the Leader" took place before Maḥdāwī on May 7–12, 1960. Each was sentenced to fifteen years' imprisonment.

These proceedings ended the judicial activity of the Special Supreme Military Court. During the following thirty-three months its president appeared in his chambers to supervise the editing of the Protocols and to play *tāwila*, backgammon, with his chief prosecutor.

* * *

Despite his exalted views of himself Qassem had shown for more than a year a degree of moderation and also of sang-froid which served him well in circumstances of appalling difficulty.

However, during the last months of 1959 Qassem's publicized pronouncements on a wide range of subjects struck a note which can only be regarded as evidence of deteriorating faculties. His words and actions were not merely politically unwise, impracticable and ultimately futile but to the observer convey a feeling of eeriness beyond their rational shortcomings, as if the deviser had after all crossed the dividing line between eccentricity and derangement. For this reason it is best to treat these expressions as a theme in themselves, rather than under the subjects they supposedly dealt with.

* * *

Qassem's belief in his mission had always been tinged with a measure of masochism. In all his perorations of the first year few motifs recur so often as his joyous readiness to die for his people and the homeland. After October 7, 1959, the tendency to self-immolation became weirdly intense. When talking of the attempt on his life some three weeks later he elaborated "with a lovely shining smile" on how the criminals had riddled his car with bullets—this was the description of the Iraqi interviewer, undoubtedly apt for all its silliness. One of them had also tried to toss a grenade into the vehicle, but his punishment had been a bullet from Qassem's revolver which killed him instantly. "The wicked cannot vanquish the just; if evil wins, there will be no goodness left⁷." Qassem's preservation had been "the miracle of the twentieth century." "I pitied the persons who were firing on me. I was certain that they would fall and that Providence was looking after me⁸." His blood-stained khaki shirt became a mascot. He kept it in hospital next to his bed, and later put it under glass in his office at the Ministry of Defence, where he showed it to every visitor.

In this atmosphere it is not surprising that official adulation of the Leader reached grotesque proportions. An excerpt from a Baghdad Radio programme entitled "The Invincible" shows the trend: "Today the whole world has come to congratulate the heroic Iraqi people on the great happy occasion [of Qassem's recovery]. The beloved leader of the country, the saviour, the liberator, the torch-bearer of its illustrious revolution . . . stronger than ever to lead his faithful and loyal people towards welfare and good, towards eminence and glory. On this immortal, historic day the whole people raise their head to Almighty God⁹. . ." This style would not have flourished if Qassem had discouraged it.

Another manifestation of the same drift were the statues of Qassem now making their appearance in various parts of the country. Two were dedicated at Najaf and Karbala, "in commemoration of the Leader's unique heroism¹⁰." Qassem does not seem to have noticed an indiscretion in the placing of his statue in the two most revered cities of Shi'i Islam.

The semi-deification did not go entirely unchallenged. In September it was reported that a Shi'i divine, Shaykh 'Abd al-'Aziz al-Badri, had been arrested for protesting against the profanation of *al-Awḥad*, which should be an attribute of God alone¹¹. Qassem must have been impressed by the

⁷ *Zamān*, Oct. 28, 1959.

⁸ *Zamān*, Nov. 3, 1959; *IT*, April 3, 1960.

⁹ *R. Baghdad*, Nov. 17 [19], 1959.

¹⁰ *IT*, Jan. 8, 1960.

¹¹ *Ḥayāt*, Sept. 25, 1959.

argument. Subsequently the appellation of *al-za'im al-awḥad*, the Sole Leader, which had almost been Qassem's official title, was used rarely, although it never vanished altogether. Another sobriquet, *al-za'im al-amin*, the Faithful Leader, took its place.

After his stay in hospital Qassem lost sight of the fact that he was not the formal Head of State. His obtuseness in this respect led him to discourtesy towards Rubay'i and downright breaches of protocol. An additional factor was probably the role which Rubay'i had played in the assassination affair. Two instances dating to 1960 are curious, each in its own way. On January 6, 1960, the first postage stamps to bear Qassem's portrait appeared; these were to be followed by many other issues, until the eve of his downfall. Secondly, the semi-official *Directory of the Republic of Iraq*, compiled during that year, printed Qassem's name arranged in a *tughrā*, the calligraphic ornament which had served as the ceremonial seal of the Ottoman sultans; in addition to Qassem's full name, the design bore the sultan's traditional attribute, *muẓaffar*—"granted victory"¹².

* * *

As late as the beginning of summer, 1959, Qassem had referred to his "Ba'thi brethren" by the side of the other parties¹³. This association was ridiculous in its make-believe, but demonstrated his consistent application of a concept which made sense as a whole. Now, in his altered state of mind, he hit out. By means of a hair-splitting and entirely unconvincing construction, he blamed the Kirkuk massacres on the Ba'th; he accused the party of acting to subvert the student body with the help of Syrian Ba'this smuggled into Iraq for this purpose; Ba'this had attempted his assassination¹⁴. Two of the three charges were true. But it was a new Qassem who singled out members of the Iraqi body politic for a labelled attack and, one feels, a weaker one.

Qassem let himself be provoked into abusing the executed officers. He denied that they had deserved well of the republic; Rif'at al-Ḥājj Sirrī, for example, "was not one of the revolution's officers; he joined us on the evening of the first day of the revolution, and he had no prior knowledge . . ."; "had he known about it, the revolution would have failed"¹⁵.

¹² *Dalil*, opposite p. 252.

¹³ *R. Baghdad*, July 5 [7], 1959.

¹⁴ Press conference, December 2 (*IT*, Dec. 7, 1959).

¹⁵ *R. Baghdad*, Nov. 16 [18], 1959. *R. Cairo* (Nov. 18 [20], 1959) replied that "everyone" knew that Rif'at was "the first" to have organized the Free Officers

This denigration of a dead enemy and a former comrade should be compared with the tribute Maḥdāwī had paid to Aref at the time of his fall from grace a year earlier, doubtless at Qassem's insistence (see above, p. 88).

* * *

The irrational strand in Qassem at that period was noticeable in his foreign policy as well.

For almost a year Qassem's personal attitude towards the UAR had been one of gentlemanly restraint in face of vulgar abuse. Now the poses were for the time reversed. Towards the end of 1959 Qassem delivered Cairo a series of insults in which he claimed that "the rulers of Egypt" hated Iraq because she was the cradle and the stronghold of Arabism; but henceforth the Arab people would gather around her "and support her with all their power"¹⁶. The pretensions of Egypt to have played an honourable role in the Arab struggle against the external foe were based on forgery and deception. Contrary to official propaganda, during the 1948 Palestine campaign the Egyptian army had behaved shamefully at Falluja—where one of the combatants had been Maj. Gamal Abdel Nasser—and at Port Said in 1956¹⁷. How could it be otherwise, when Egypt herself was a major partner in the rape of Arab Palestine? Instead of having constituted the areas which had been occupied by Egypt and Jordan as an independent Arab state, pending the destruction of Israel, she had cut her own slice from that prostrate country. She was a thief, an accomplice of Israel. An Arab country of thirty million inhabitants and bordering on Israel should have done away with Israel within twenty-four hours. Egypt should have used "the technique of surprise, and not the technique of much ado about nothing." Qassem also promised, "We alone will do away with Israel"¹⁸. During the following months Qassem successively proposed the actual constitution of a Palestinian state, the creation of a fund for that purpose and the formation of a "Palestine Liberation Army." The two latter projects were started, and the "army" eventually approached battalion strength, recruited from the five thousand Palestinian refugees in Iraq, and trained by Iraqi officers.

movement. Qassem had actually said no more than that Rif'at had not been informed about the timing of the operation, which was no doubt true. It is an instance of Qassemite semantics.

¹⁶ *R. Baghdad*, Oct. 28 [30], Nov. 27 [30], 1959.

¹⁷ *R. Baghdad*, Nov. 16 [18], 1959.

¹⁸ *R. Baghdad*, Dec. 15 [17], 1959; *Mabda'*, Dec. 18, 1959.

Analogous was a revival of the Fertile Crescent scheme. Qassem began to assert that the idea of a political association between Iraq and Syria had been "imperialist" when cherished by Nuri, for then Iraq had been in fetters, and Syria independent, but now the project was "patriotic," for Iraq was free. Qassem stressed that he would not force developments. Iraq did not seek expansion—her army might have conquered Syria had he, Qassem, given the order; but this matter was for the Syrian people alone to decide¹⁹. Commentators at Baghdad went a step further and described in glowing terms the inseparable links between the two countries—"the Syrian people are a throbbing part of Iraq and they are Iraq's living loyal half"—as well as Syria's sad fate under her present Cairene rulers²⁰. On December 22 Baghdad Radio inaugurated a daily half-hour "Voice of the UAR from Baghdad," "to reflect the desires of the UAR people²¹."

The UAR reacted to these attacks with greater reserve than might have been expected. The extravagance of Qassem's invectives made the task of face-saving easier. It was Abdel Nasser's turn to show contemptuous restraint; his commentaries as well as those in the UAR press and radio took the line that Qassem was "a sick man who had completely lost control of his nerves²²."

The Iraqi campaign—if such it can be called—was carried into the new year, but lost its more scurrilous aspects. Qassem continued to express his concern for Syria. However, he dropped the Fertile Crescent issue and concentrated instead on his wish that the Syrian people might regain their sovereignty²³. This approach was hardly less hostile to Cairo, but was infinitely more realistic. The Egyptian side felt constrained to return to argument and counter-reproach, in lieu of its recent supercilious contempt.

Qassem's overall record shows that he was a "Little Iraqi"—his political imagination, loyalties and ambitions were restricted to the frontiers of the Iraqi state where the Iraqi people was domiciled. Even the ill-conceived Kuwait enterprise of 1961 (see below, pp. 349–53) can be reasonably explained on the basis that Qassem honestly saw the principality as a *qaḍā'* of Basra province, to be restored as soon as chance permitted. Was then his mooted of the Fertile Crescent scheme of November 1959 nothing but a counter-propaganda stunt? Or did Qassem really flirt for a moment with a project

¹⁹ e.g., *Thawra*, Nov. 7, 1959; *R. Baghdad*, Nov. 16 [18], 1959.

²⁰ e.g., *R. Baghdad*, Nov. 25 [27], 1959.

²¹ *SWB*, Dec. 24, 28, 1959.

²² *Ahrām*, Nov. 27, 1959.

²³ e.g., in his speech on Army Day, 1960 (*Zamān*, Jan. 7, 1960).

that would detach Damascus from Cairo and subordinate her instead to Baghdad? He never took any steps towards practical realization of the project.

In November Qassem had given the colloquy with the UAR a new and unexpected twist. In December he picked a quarrel with Iran which put him into the position of a bully and a warmonger—worse, a pasteboard bully and warmonger.

On November 28 the Shah regretted at a press conference that the new Iraqi regime was showing even less readiness to solve pending problems in a neighbourly spirit than had its predecessor²⁴. Qassem responded with a declaration disputing Iran's status on the Shatt al-Arab near Abadan, where the frontier between the two countries runs for three miles in mid-river although the Shatt al-Arab is otherwise Iraqi territory. The present demarcation, Qassem asserted, had been extorted from Iraq under pressure back in 1936-37, "so that the oil companies could avoid paying taxes to Iraq." The cession had been contingent on the solution of frontier problems in general—Qassem did not enter into details—and "unless they are solved in future, we are at liberty to redeem that strip as a part of the homeland²⁵." Naturally, international excitement over this implied threat of force was considerable. Iran affected to see a danger of war and moved troops into the frontier area. It took Qassem and his Foreign Ministry much ingenuity to reassure the world and their own public—without seeming to retreat—that Iraq felt herself bound by treaties she had entered into; moreover, she had not moved a single soldier to the area under dispute²⁶. Qassem's prestige cannot have been improved by the resignation of Ḥusayn Jamīl, the Iraqi Ambassador to Teheran, which was announced on December 27.

Towards the end of January 1960 the excitement calmed down and relations between Iraq and Iran resumed their normal state of distrustful coexistence.

²⁴ *R. Tehran*, Nov. 28 [Dec. 1], 1959.

²⁵ *IT*, Dec. 4, 1959; for an international lawyer's survey of the case, see E.L., "River Boundaries: the Legal Aspects of the Shatt al-Arab Frontier," *International and Comparative Law Quarterly*, IX, 1960, pp. 208-36.

²⁶ For representative statements by Qassem: *R. Baghdad*, Dec. 28 [30], 1959; by Ḥāshim Jawād: *R. Baghdad*, Dec. 29—*IMB*, Dec. 30, 1959.

CHAPTER 20 THE ASSOCIATIONS LAW

On January 2, 1960, the Associations Law was enacted¹. The day before, when it was passed by the Cabinet, Qassem had solemnly handed copies of the new law to a gathering of journalists at his office, describing it as "a revolution in itself²."

The following is a paraphrase of the law with emphasis on the politically significant points:

The law applied to "societies" (*jam'iyyāt*) which were defined as "groups with a permanent status formed of a number of persons, natural or corporate, for a purpose other than material profit" (section 1); it did not apply to societies formed under special laws (a reference to trade unions and other legally constituted "national organizations") (section 41).

Notice of the intended formation of a society must be submitted to the Minister of the Interior by no less than ten founding members. The notice must be accompanied by the constitution of the society, giving, *inter alia*, the aims of the society, its financial resources—actual as well as expected—and its headquarters, which must be in Iraq (section 2). The aims must satisfy the following conditions: they must not be contrary to the country's independence and national unity, to the Republican regime and to the requirements of democratic government; they must not sow discord between the various communities of Iraq; they must not conceal unstated aims; they must not be contrary to public law and decency (section 4). The founding members, like all members of the society, must be in possession of civil rights and without convictions for dishonourable offences; they must confirm in writing their allegiance to the constitution of the country (section 3).

The society to be formed would come into existence thirty days after the founding notice and the attendant information had been submitted

¹ *WI*, No. 283, Jan. 2, 1960, pp. 1-7.

² *IT*, Jan. 4, 1960.

to the Minister of the Interior. The minister might, if he saw fit in the light of the provisions quoted above, reject the notice, or request amendments, deletions or additions to the constitution, or reject any of the founding members, all within thirty days of submission of the notice. The founding members must comply with the minister's request, and a new reviewing period of thirty days would commence from the date the minister received their reply. Alternatively, the founding members might appeal against the minister's decision within fifty days to the Court of Cassation, which must hand its ruling within fifteen days from appeal; this decision was final. The society might open branches in a province fifteen days after notice had been given to the governor, the procedure resembling that regarding the formation of the society (sections 5,6 and 13).

The society must conduct its affairs in a democratic, peaceful and lawful manner. Its general convention must convene at least once a year, all members to enjoy equal voting rights. The founding members must summon the first general convention within three months of the formation of the society. Elections to committees were to be supervised and confirmed in writing by a magistrate, or a representative appointed by him who attended the general convention. Resolutions of the general convention and acts committed by the committees or their members might be annulled or revoked by a court of first instance if they were in contravention of the law, the constitution of the society or a resolution of the general convention, at the request of any interested person if made to the court within sixty days of that resolution or act (sections 7, 9, 10 and 11).

A society must keep full records regarding its membership, finances, correspondence and resolutions, and render an annual account to the Minister of the Interior (sections 14 and 24).

No society should "affiliate itself with, subscribe to, or join, any society . . . whose headquarters are outside Iraq"; nor would any society "be allowed to receive or obtain moneys or funds of any sort from outside Iraq . . ." (section 21).

A "party" was defined as a "society with a political aim" (section 30).

Members of the armed forces, judges, certain high administrative officials and students of primary and secondary schools were forbidden to join a party. Students of higher institutions were forbidden to participate in any kind of party activity in the grounds of their college (sections 31 and 32)³.

³ At the journalists' gathering of January 1, Qassem had preened himself on having given "complete freedom to university students to join political parties" (*IT*, Jan. 4, 1960). It was a concession to leftist opinion at the time.

Other special conditions applying to parties were: their founding notices must be supported by fifty signatories in addition to the ten founding members; their members must be of Iraqi nationality; they were to sustain "nothing resembling military or para-military formations in their composition, activity, training of members, regulations, dress or equipment" (sections 31, 33 and 34).

A party might issue its own newspaper and literature, provided that the connection was clearly indicated (section 36).

The Minister of the Interior was charged with supervision of all societies coming within the framework of the law. He had the right to make specified requests, to issue warnings, to stop a society's activities and close down its meeting places for not more than thirty days by injunction. He might request the court of first instance of the locality where the society was registered to pronounce the dissolution of the society for having contravened the law or for having been inactive without sufficient reason for at least a year. The society might appeal against any of the minister's decisions before the Court of Cassation (section 22, 23, 26 and 27).

The law came into force on January 6, 1960 (section 46).

* * *

Both in tenor and contents the Associations Law was very different from its immediate predecessor, Nuri's destructive Associations Ordinance of 1954 which had not even mentioned political parties⁴. The new law gave ample room for the heterogeneous society of Iraq to express itself in the form of political parties pursuing their aims in a lawful and organized manner—provided, however, the minister permitted. If not, then the law afforded him every opportunity for obstruction. Sections 4 and 21 in particular were tailored to serve contingencies appropriate to "national" parties like the ICP and the UDPK.

Brig. Yahyā, the man upon whom so much depended, would certainly act solely on Qassem's behalf, with enough adroitness and suavity to save appearances.

* * *

The first party notifications under the law were submitted on January 9; since January 6, "Army Day" and January 8, a Friday, were both public

⁴ *WI*, No. 3467. Sept. 22, 1954; also Grassmuck, "The Electoral Process in Iraq, 1952-1958," *MEJ*, XIV, no. 4.

holidays, it seems that the authorities did not bother to begin so momentous an undertaking as the registration of political parties on the single working-day in between. Three notifications were submitted on this date: those of the Iraqi Communist Party, the National Democratic Party and the United Democratic Party of Iraqi Kurdistan. The applications cannot have surprised the Iraqi public in any way; the parties in question had been known and advertised as the "national" parties for the better part of the preceding year.

The essay of these parties, and others, to attain legal existence, with its wealth of self-revelation, drama and even farce, constitutes a key chapter in the history of Iraq under Qassem.

CHAPTER 21 THE COMMUNIST MOVEMENT UNDER THE ASSOCIATIONS LAW

The notification of “a political party called the Iraqi Communist Party” was signed by Zakī Khayrī al-Sa’id. Attached were the signatures of fifteen founding members (including Zakī Khayrī) and eighty-two supporting members. These ninety-seven names constitute the longest list of prominent party members ever published by the ICP. The party secretary, Husayn al-Raḍī, was third on the list; as he appeared in public under the pseudonym of Salām ‘Ādil, his party function was not mentioned¹.

Appended—in accordance with the provisions of the Associations Law—were the party programme and its “internal constitution.” The programme was superscribed *al-mithāq al-waṭanī*, the “National Covenant”². It was composed of two parts: an introduction taking up rather less than one-third of the programme, and a statement of the platform proper. Of interest in the introduction is that it returned to the support of a United National Front for “all the anti-imperialist classes and forces.” The platform is noteworthy for its outspoken advocacy of Kurdish rights—including the right of the Kurds to manage their administrative affairs—“within Iraqi unity,” and for the aim to lower the maximum limit of land ownership fixed by the Agrarian Reform Law of 1958. It afforded latitude to “national” capital, although “guidance” was demanded. According to the authors, the programme had been called the “National Covenant” because the aims it contained were “in the interest of all the patriotic forces”³. There is no hint that the party was looking beyond the “principles of the 14th July revolution,” and the terminology of the Marxist repertoire was avoided.

On the other hand, the statement of the “internal constitution” was outspoken, for a communist publication⁴. In contrast to the wording of the programme, the terms Marxist-Leninist and revolutionary —independ-

¹ The full list, giving details of their professions as declared by the applicants, appears in *Zamān*, Jan. 10, 1960.

² *Thaqāfa Jadīdā*, No. 14, Jan-Feb, 1960, pp. 102–24.

³ *IS*, Feb. 9, 1960.

⁴ Published in *Iraqi Review*, Jan. 25, 1960.

ent of the "14th July"—did figure in the rules, although unobtrusively (for details of the organization—see Appendix).

* * *

To follow the outcome of the ICP application, events must be traced to a point six weeks before the promulgation of the Associations Law.

On November 21, 1959, the first issue of a new daily, *al-Mabda'*, appeared in Baghdad. The publisher stated was Dāwūd al-Šā'igh, a Christian Baghdadi lawyer in his late fifties. Šā'igh was an early and prominent member of the ICP, who had a record of secessions from and readmissions to the party; from 1943 to 1947 he had led a communist splinter group, the Communist League. His last return to the fold had been in 1956. He had returned to Iraq from exile after the revolution, but his name had not often figured among the party notables since. The newspaper's appearance does not seem to have aroused comment on its publisher's political associations. Its editorials were progressive, properly anti-imperialist, and enthusiastically pro-Qassem. What was uncommon, however, was the patronage which *al-Mabda'* immediately received from Qassem. He granted the newspaper two lengthy interviews on subjects of first-rate political topicality. In the first interview, two days after the birth of the paper, Qassem took the unusual step of praising *al-Mabda'*'s "sound judgment⁵."

On January 5, 1960, the day before the Associations Law came into force, Šā'igh stated in the Baghdad leftist daily *al-Akhbār* that he would "try to form the Iraqi Communist Party"; he had "always considered himself a member of the party" and asserted "the need for the formation of a single Communist Party in Iraq⁶." The ICP leadership apparently saw Šā'igh's declaration as a manoeuvre to improve his position within the party. There is good evidence that the ICP was dumbfounded by what actually followed⁷.

Šā'igh's intentions were revealed on January 9, when he declared that his "notification of forming a Communist Party had nothing to do with that submitted by 'Abd al-Qādir Ismā'il al-Bustānī, the editor of *Ittiḥād al-Sha'b*⁸." He submitted this notification on the following day, January 10⁹.

⁵ Quoted by *R. Baghdad*, Nov. 23 [26], 1959.

⁶ *Akhbār*—*ANA*, Jan. 5 [7], 1960.

⁷ Thus *Iraqi Review*, Feb. 24, 1960, and private information of author.

⁸ *ANA*, Jan. 9 [12], 1960.

⁹ *IT*, Feb. 9, 1960. It should have been a prime consideration of Šā'igh to forestall his rivals in submitting the notification for the "Communist Party," but he

The programme and rules of Ṣā'igh's party were published in *al-Mabda'* of January 12, 1960¹⁰. The programme declared the founders' adherence to Marxist-Leninist theory. The sections dealing with social and economic problems and with foreign policy were as close as possible to the programme of the ICP. Loyalty to the hero and the leader of the 14th July revolution was expressed in fulsome terms. The "rules" referred to a body which was, literally, non-existent; this did not, of course, preclude the possibility that it might yet grow.

Ṣā'igh's primary problem was how to mobilize the requisite number of sponsors. He did not publish his list of founding members with the programme, apparently for security reasons. However, as early as January 14 it became known that between six and eight "founders" including Kāzim al-Shāwī, the editor of *al-Mabda'*, had retracted their signatures. A new founders' list was compounded and this time published¹¹. The very next day, February 4, *Ittiḥād al-Sha'b* carried a letter purporting to be signed by eight of the founders in which they announced their withdrawal from the party. Finally, on the occasion of the party's confirmation (see below), *al-Mabda'* published another list of eleven "founding members," of whom only Ṣā'igh and two others had signed the original application¹². Two resigned once more a fortnight later, invalidating the founders' list a third time. But by then even the ICP no longer saw a purpose in protracting its protests. The ICP claim that Ṣā'igh never succeeded in collecting the required fifty supporting signatures may be credited. It was said that Qassem had asked Mullā Muṣṭafā Barzani to "lend" Ṣā'igh fifteen UDPK members; Barzani agreed, but Ibrāhīm Aḥmad refused.

All the names associated with Ṣā'igh's party were of totally unknown persons, with the marginal exception of Shāwī. According to an ICP source they did not include "even one communist"¹³.

A report was later circulated in the communist press that on January 24 the Minister of the Interior requested Ṣā'igh to make certain amendments to his programme, that Ṣā'igh complied on January 27, and that therefore, Ṣā'igh's party could not have been regarded as confirmed

seems to have been an ineffective executive. According to rumour the Ministry of the Interior overcame this hitch by directing the reception clerk to return the ICP application to Zakī Khayrī because it was improperly typed; by the time new copies had been prepared, Ṣā'igh had sent in his own notification.

¹⁰ *Mabda'*—*IT*, Jan. 10, 1960.

¹¹ *Mabda'* Feb. 3—*Iraqi Review*, Feb. 24, 1960.

¹² *Mabda'* Feb. 9, 1960.

¹³ *Iraqi Review*, June 15, 1960.

before February 27¹⁴. This point was legally important since it would have invalidated the minister's case for rejecting Zakī Khayrī's notification (see below).

Whether the report was correct or not, on February 9, in the evening hours, an extra edition of *al-Mabda'* announced "with pride" "the open activity of our party." The following day Ṣā'igh and his founding committee called on Qassem as the leadership of the legal Communist Party of Iraq.

That Ṣā'igh's party enjoyed Qassem's patronage may be inferred from the preceding account of its genesis. But direct evidence is not lacking. The publication of *al-Mabda'* was made possible by a substantial loan, according to another source by a straight subsidy, of ID. 5,000, from the Prime Minister's special fund¹⁵. During the early days of the battle of words between *Ittiḥād al-Sha'b* and *al-Mabda'* (see below) Qassem lent the latter his prestige when he told Ṣā'igh in an interview that "there should be only one Communist Party in Iraq¹⁶." Qassem continued to build up Ṣā'igh during the critical period immediately after legalization of his party by treating him as the factual leader of the Iraqi Communist Party and by granting further interviews for *al-Mabda'* on general topics.

* * *

For four weeks Zakī Khayrī had no reply to his notification. Then, with the deadline for ministerial objection drawing near, the founding committee received a letter signed by the Minister of the Interior, on February 6, 1959. In it the minister requested, in non-committal language, that a number of amendments be made to the internal constitution of the party. Among these was deletion of the attribute "revolutionary" wherever used. Evidently Iraq had had her revolution; no other was desired. In addition the minister asked for a clarification of the terms "National Covenant" and "Marxist-Leninist." The sending of the letter automatically postponed the licensing of the ICP for another month at least.

The ICP leadership took no chances: its answer was immediate and obsequious. In a message to Brig. Yaḥyā of February 8 the founding committee acceded to the minister's requests and suggestions point by point. The sections objected to were amended. The word "revolutionary" was

¹⁴ *IS*, Feb. 10, 22, 1960; *Ṣawt al-Aḥrār*, Feb. 24, 1960.

¹⁵ *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, Feb. 10, 1960. This journal was generally well informed on Iraqi affairs during these years, thanks to its correspondents Tuetsch and Hottinger.

¹⁶ *ANA*, Jan. 16 [19], 1960.

struck out. *Al-mithāq al-waṭani* became the neutral *minhāj*, platform, "to prevent misunderstandings," although this gesture had not been asked for. An involved dissertation on the meaning of "Marxist-Leninist" contorted itself to combine doctrinal correctness with regard for Qassem's idiosyncrasies¹⁷.

After the licensing of the Ṣā'igh Communist Party the ICP anticipated one official objection which had become probable. On February 14, the founding committee informed the Ministry of the Interior, "in order to avoid any legal complications," that it had decided to change the party's name to the *Ittiḥād al-Sha'b* Party, and asked that the change be made in its previous notification accordingly¹⁸. What heartburnings the step cost the Old Guard would be hard to conjecture: it was a loss of face, no doubt, and meant parting in humiliating circumstances with the tradition of a generation. Zakī Khayrī made it known in the pages of *Ittiḥād al-Sha'b*, perhaps to quieten uneasy comrades, that the new name "did not mean a change in the party's platform or internal constitution, nor the abandonment of Marxist-Leninist principles¹⁹." It was an excusable statement, but unwisely timed.

On the day after Zakī Khayrī's assertion appeared in the press, February 23, the Minister of the Interior informed "Sayyid Zakī Khayrī and his associates on the founding committee of the Iraqi Communist Party (*sic*)" that their application to establish a political party had been rejected²⁰. Four reasons were given, three formal, the last touching the heart of the matter:

- 1) An "Iraqi Communist Party" had already been established under the law;
- 2) the request to change the party's name was unacceptable, since "changing the name of the party after submitting the application meant changing the [internal] constitution without legal permission";
- 3) the objectives of the party were "in agreement or almost in agreement" with those of the Iraqi Communist Party already in legal existence;
- 4) the ministry had learned from "responsible quarters" that the party did not conform with the stipulations of section 4 of the Associations Law (see above, p. 265).

¹⁷ The letter and reply are rendered in full in *IS*, Feb. 8, 9, 1960.

¹⁸ *IT*, Feb. 16; *Zamān*, Feb. 24, 1960.

¹⁹ *IS*, Feb. 22, 1960.

²⁰ *Zamān*, Feb. 24, 1960.

The ICP did not use its right of appeal under the law. A spokesman for the "Iraqi Communist Party (Ittihad al-Sha'b)" stated that on March 7 the founding committee had addressed a "comprehensive memorandum" to Qassem, in which it took issue with Brig. Yahya's latest communication. Rather than bring their case before the Court of Cassation, the petitioners said, they preferred to appeal to the revolutionary government, of which Qassem was the leader and the inspirer. At the same time the committee was considering a new application²¹.

The motives for waiving the right of judicial appeal and petitioning Qassem instead are clear. The ICP could expect nothing from the Court of Cassation, and Zakī Khayrī said as much when interviewed: "The implementation of law in any one society is always inspired by the interests of the ruling class and the nature of the prevailing political system. This is exactly why public opinion is, ultimately, the highest court competent for deciding important issues such as legalizing a Communist Party²²." For the ICP thus to state its views at a press conference was an unusual step to take; it indicated the belief that by putting Qassem under public pressure the party might stand some chance of success.

The memorandum elicited no reply except the advice, privately given, to unite with Šā'igh's party. If Qassem had calculated that the ICP would, if not forgive, then at least pass over, the preposterous sleight-of-hand which he had practised on it, then his tactical astuteness had carried the day once more. On March 6, a day before the last attempt to have the notification accepted, *Ittihad al-Sha'b* wrote, "We support the government of the revolution under the leader 'Abd al-Karīm Qassem because it is a patriotic government which has proclaimed its hostility to imperialism and has responded to the ambition of the people for independence . . . These remain the criteria on which our policy will be based²³." A fortnight later, when it was already clear that the personal appeal to Qassem had failed, the newspaper announced even more unequivocally: "We will not be an opposition party to the national regime; rather we shall defend it to the last, while criticizing every negative aspect of its policies. The most urgent task of our party and the national liberation movement in the present circumstances is to safeguard the national independence of the republic²⁴." In other words, so long as Qassem did not re-join the Central Treaty Organization or accede to the UAR, or, presumably, voice his

²¹ *IT, Iraqi Review*, March 9, 1960.

²² *Ḥadāra—Iraqi Review*, March 23, 1960.

²³ *IS*, March 6, 1960.

²⁴ Zakī Khayrī in *Iraqi Review*, March 23, 1960.

personal enmity to the communists, he had nothing to fear from the ICP. The ICP never submitted another notification.

* * *

The relations which developed between the ICP and Sā'igh's party can be understood only if the overriding principles of ICP strategy established in mid-summer 1959 are remembered: try and try again to achieve legal status; conserve forces; avoid a showdown; above all, avoid provoking Qassem into stamping out the party by force.

When Sā'igh had first sprung his surprise the communist press reacted with scorn and contempt, but with a noticeable undertone of apprehension: clearly, once the move was understood, there were no illusions as to what Qassem was capable of. The absurdity and impudence of an attempt by an isolated outsider to run away with the ICP's identity was castigated at length. The scandal and iniquity of countenancing the attempt was deplored. Sā'igh's character and past were analysed, to his discredit. His treacherous intrigues after the revolution were exposed. All the same, the style of the protestations was more subdued than might have been expected, and abuse such as had been applied for years to Tito was generally absent. Endeavours to alienate the loyalty of Sā'igh's followers did not entail force or threats of violence so far as is known²⁵.

Sā'igh's opening gambit against the ICP had been to suggest a gentlemen's agreement: there should be only one Communist Party, and the loser whose notification was rejected by the minister was to show a spirit of sportsmanship and join forces with the winner²⁶. Within a few days, however, *al-Mabda'* started to complain of acts of "seduction, bribery, intimidation and shaming," perpetrated by "the Ittihad al-Sha'b group" against "patriotic elements rallying round. . . *al-Mabda'*"²⁷. At the same time *al-Mabda'* took to exposing the deviationism, leftism and inconsistencies of that group and called on its members to join Sā'igh's Communist Party forthwith. This attack reached its climax towards the end of January, when *al-Mabda'* first bade the rival party purge itself of "the opportunist leftist elements which had intruded themselves into its leadership," and then proceeded to identify them by name: Husayn Raḍī, 'Amir 'Abdallah,

²⁵ For months after the licensing of Sā'igh's party the police had to guard its Baghdad office, as it had become a sport to make off with the doorplate "The Iraqi Communist Party."

²⁶ *Mabda'*, Jan. 12, 1960.

²⁷ *Mabda'*—I.T., Jan. 17, 1960.

Jamāl al-Ḥaydarī—the entire political bureau of the ICP²⁸. The published reaction of the ICP to this enormity was again remarkably tame: it rejected the demand on the ground that “no political party with self-respect” could submit to the will of an individual on such a point in disregard of both party rules and the wish of its members²⁹.

Not only were direct contacts between the ICP and Ṣā’igh never broken off entirely; from stage to stage the party made greater concessions to its former member, despised and loathed as he must have been. When Ṣā’igh first made his statement to *al-Akḥbār* alluding to the possibility of a schism, “efforts [were made] to bring him back to the correct path³⁰.” After the two notifications had been submitted, a number of meetings were held which were dignified by the name of negotiations between delegations *prima facie* of equal status. No results were achieved.

Contacts were renewed in May and June. By then the ICP was ready for a radical departure. It informed Ṣā’igh and, concomitantly, the authorities that it was ready to accept Ṣā’igh’s demands without further reservation. The communists would enter Ṣā’igh’s party en bloc. However, the original founders’ committee—the cream of the ICP—would withdraw from activity³¹.

This was a stupefying offer, and well merits the attributes of “selfless” and “courageous” which the ICP bestowed on it. The underlying reasoning was expressed by the authors in *Ittiḥād al-Sha’b*: “We were prompted by our strong belief that sooner or later sound principles are bound to carry the day . . . The Iraqi communists have attained such a degree of constancy, coherence, and discipline and so high a sense of ideology that there can be no fear of their being smashed, even if they are included in what Ṣā’igh calls ‘the Iraqi Communist Party in its legal form,’ and even if he stays on top of that combination³².” Privately the motive was put more briefly: “We would have swilled Ṣā’igh out of his own house without ado³³.” But the offer was a deep humiliation, whatever the calculations that justified it.

The gesture was of no avail. During the talks the ICP negotiators made the gross tactical mistake of trying to suborn one of Ṣā’igh’s aides. Ṣā’igh, who was no fool, saw an opportunity to break off negotiations. In reaction,

²⁸ *Mabda’*, Jan. 21, 23, 1960; *Mabda’—I.T.*, Jan. 31, 1960.

²⁹ *IS*, Jan. 24, 1960.

³⁰ *Iraqi Review*, Feb. 24, 1960.

³¹ *IS*, May 19, 1960; *Iraqi Review*, June 15, 1960.

³² *IS*, May 19, 1960.

³³ Private information.

the ICP made the contemptuous remark that Ṣā'igh "was not his own master"³⁴. This thinly veiled dig at Qassem was true. However, the ICP leaders had made it easy for master and servant to counter their move.

The subsequent history of Ṣā'igh's Communist Party was consonant with its beginnings. There were more resignations and "expulsions." The party received a licence to publish an additional newspaper, to be called *Kifāḥ al-Sha'b* ("The People's Fight")—the name was another obvious attempt to steal ICP property. The project never materialized. *Al-Mabda'* itself did not appear during most of June, apparently for financial reasons. On April 26 Ṣā'igh had begged the Minister of the Interior to sanction the postponement of the party's founding convention for six months, "because of the abnormal conditions surrounding our party"³⁵. Under the terms of the Associations Law it should have convened within three months of the party's legalization, that is, on May 10 at the latest. The minister granted the request.

* * *

Towards the end of January it became known that the notification of a new party would soon be submitted to the Minister of the Interior³⁶. This was the first to be made by a body which did not represent, or aspire to represent, a political party in existence before the revolution. The sponsors were men of prominence, with decidedly communist connections; the foremost names mentioned were those of 'Aziz Sharif, president of the Iraqi Peace Partisans, and 'Abd al-Fattāḥ Ibrāhīm, since March 1959 Director-General of the Board of Oil Affairs. Another sponsor was Muḥammad Maḥdī al-Jawāhirī, chairman of the Journalists Association.

The notification was delayed so that 'Aziz Sharif, then on Peace Partisans' business in Indonesia, could attach his signature. He returned on February 10; when the notification was submitted on the following day it transpired that he had not signed, and 'Abd al-Fattāḥ Ibrāhīm put his name to the covering letter to the minister³⁷. The *minhāj* emphasized minority rights and proposed a single-chamber Assembly elected by direct vote³⁸. By then the party had become known as the Republican Party. The names of its founders, far more than its official platform, identified the Republican Party as a communist satellite.

³⁴ *IS*, May 19; *Iraqi Review*, June 15, 1960.

³⁵ *IT*, April 29, May 12; *Mid. Mir.*, May 1, 1960.

³⁶ *Taqaddum—IT*, Feb. 4, 1960.

³⁷ The list of founding and supporting members appears in *Bilād*, Feb. 12, 1960.

³⁸ *IS*, Feb. 21, 1960.

On February 29 the Minister of the Interior gave his reply³⁹. He objected to the detailed views of constitutional arrangements expressed by the founders which anticipated, in the minister's opinion, the permanent constitution. Furthermore he took exception to the terms "the Arab people" and "the Kurdish people" since "according to the Provisional Constitution the term 'people' applies to Arabs and Kurds together." This seemingly petty complaint was based on a fundamental concept of the regime, which recognized "nationalities"—*qawmiyyāt*—and "minorities"—*aqalliyyāt*—but only one "people of Iraq."

On March 5 the sponsors submitted their modified programme⁴⁰. The "people" had turned into "nationalities" and the "single-chamber Assembly" into a "parliamentary system."

The amendments did not achieve their purpose. On March 27 the minister informed Ibrāhīm that the application to form a Republican Party was rejected. "He had not received the necessary information about the party's founding members, including Muḥammad Maḥdī al-Jawāhirī, chairman of the Journalists Association; . . . the alterations made on his instructions to the party's programme and rules had not been accepted by all the founding members, thus nullifying the party's reply to the ministry⁴¹."

Like the ICP, the Republican Party had no faith in the Court of Cassation; like Zakī Khayrī a month earlier, 'Abd al-Fattāḥ Ibrāhīm addressed himself to Qassem in person, on April 5, 1960⁴². It is not known whether he received a reply.

A bitter official communist comment on Yaḥyā's rejection was: "It would have been much better . . . if the Ministry of the Interior had not invoked any legal grounds for the refusal, because they do not convince anyone⁴³."

* * *

A light touch to the struggle of the Left for legal recognition was supplied by the still-born ambition of Maḥdāwī to become a party leader himself. Soon after the promulgation of the Associations Law the president of the Special Supreme Military Court made it known that he was considering the forming of a People's Party, together with Col. Waṣfī Ṭāhir, Qassem's

³⁹ The letter is reprinted in *Zamān*, March 3, 1960.

⁴⁰ *IT*, March 6, 1960.

⁴¹ *Ṣawt al-Aḥrār—ANA*, March 28 [30], 1960.

⁴² *IT*, April 10, 1960.

⁴³ *Iraqi Review*, April 13, 1960.

principal aide-de-camp, and Col. Mājīd Amīn, the chief prosecutor of his court, provided that Qassem agreed⁴⁴. It appears that Qassem did not take to the idea, and the notification was never submitted.

It is interesting that the ICP never supported Mahdāwī's project even after it had despaired of receiving a licence. One reason must have been that Mahdāwī, whatever his half-baked ideologies, was Qassem's man, and it would have been utterly difficult to wean a political party of his away into virtual opposition. Moreover, it is safe to assume that by the beginning of 1960 the communists realized that a fresh association of their cause with Mahdāwī's person would only bring ridicule on themselves.

* * *

The failure of the ICP to achieve legal recognition was followed by the disappearance of the licensed party press. In keeping with the pattern, the process of eclipse was gradual.

On April 24, 1960, the editors of *Ittiḥād al-Sha'b* complained to the Military Governor General of hostile gangs which had assembled about the offices of the newspaper in the Bāb al-Shaykh quarter of Baghdad for the preceding five nights shouting threats and hurling stones. The "bandits" were recognized as hailing chiefly from A'zamiyya and Karkh, in other words they were militant nationalists. The staff had called for the police, but "the latter were remiss and, perhaps, more than that⁴⁵." The affair was said to be symptomatic of what distributors and patrons of the paper were facing in other parts of the country. The letter of complaint concluded with the hope that 'Abdi would expose the wire-pullers.

Shortly afterwards the paper had to experience worse from the authorities than mere indifference to hooliganism.

Since March *Ittiḥād al-Sha'b* had encountered sporadic difficulties in southern Iraq, where military government was in the hands of the commander of the First Division, Brig. Sayyid Ḥamīd Sayyid Ḥusayn. On June 1, 1960, an order from the commander banned *Ittiḥād al-Sha'b* from the entire area and penalized its introduction, distribution and possession under section 31 of the Baghdad Penal Code Amendment Law of 1959 (see above, p. 155). Despite the vehement protests of the leftist press, an appeal to Qassem by the Chairman of the Journalists Association, and

⁴⁴ e.g., *Ḥayāt*, Jan. 17, 1960; *Bilād*, Jan. 29, 1960.

⁴⁵ The letter is reprinted in *Iraqi Review*, May 16, 1960.

a hint at intervention by Qassem himself on behalf of the paper, the ban was never lifted⁴⁶.

The occasion that prompted Brig. Sayyid Ḥusayn's measures deserves to be recorded. In the south, as in other parts of Iraq, an anti-illiteracy campaign had been in existence for many years, but the new regime had stepped it up considerably. The ICP had always considered that carrying the knowledge of reading and writing to the masses was one of its main duties; in consequence, this campaign was widely viewed as a communist shift to corrupt the people. In the spring of 1960 the Teachers Union called upon its members to do their utmost to cooperate with the government schemes, apparently in an effort to reestablish the party's declining influence in the countryside while ostensibly supporting official policy. Sayyid Ḥusayn took alarm and forbade all further courses. *Ittiḥād al-Sha'b* made a scathing attack on "obscurantists" at work in the south. Sayyid Ḥusayn saw an intention to weaken the government, or to vilify the armed forces, and invoked section 31⁴⁷.

While *Ittiḥād al-Sha'b* and its allies battled to have the ban on the newspaper removed in the south, the prohibition spread to other parts of the country. In most quarters of Baghdad *Ittiḥād al-Sha'b* continued to sell. This twilight state did not last.

On September 23 'Abd al-Qādir Ismā'īl al-Bustānī, publisher-editor of *Ittiḥād al-Sha'b*, was arraigned before the second military court for having infringed the Press Ordinance of 1954 and the Military Governor General's Proclamation of September 2, 1959, by publishing information on incidents still *sub judice*. On Friday, September 30, under flaming headlines, *Ittiḥād al-Sha'b* brought Bustānī's plea in his own defence. This proved to be its last legal issue. On October 1—the newspaper did not appear on Saturday—Bustānī was sentenced to three months in prison, and his paper was suspended for ten months. It never reappeared.

The remainder of the licensed communist press did not expire at once.

⁴⁶ A survey of the "patriotic press" on this subject appears in *Iraqi Review*, July 12, 1960. On July 28 Qassem held one of his marathon press conferences. As reported in the communist press (*IS*, Aug. 2, 1960) the *Ittiḥād al-Sha'b* representative asked Qassem about Sayyid Ḥusayn's ban. Qassem replied: "You can send the paper as from now to any district, as we have cancelled the measure. The readers themselves can decide whether to buy the paper." However, the ban remained in force. It is extremely unlikely that either 'Abdī or Sayyid Ḥusayn would have defied a clear order from Qassem. Presumably Qassem countered an unwelcome interjection at his press conference with a pleasant reply and then did no more about it.

⁴⁷ *IS*, June 9; *Iraqi Review*, July 12, 1960.

It is clear that the ICP made an effort to provide continuity. The *Iraqi Review* disappeared with *Ittiḥād al-Sha'b*, of which it was the supplement. But the Ministry of Guidance, which under its head Dr. Sāmīr was still favourable to the Left, authorized the communist weeklies *al-Haḍāra* and *al-Thabāt* to appear henceforth as dailies. *Ṣawt al-Sha'b*, published intermittently by Muḥammad Ḥusayn Abū al-'Īs since August 1959, reappeared as a daily on November 1, 1960. At least three other ICP newspapers in the provinces were not automatically affected by the closure of the official organ.

However, the government had made up its mind to eradicate the ICP press root and branch. By the end of the year orders from 'Abdī had suspended the above-mentioned newspapers; the September 1959 proclamation gave him all the latitude he needed. For the time being the line was drawn at the official organs, and pro-communist journals not directly under ICP management were excluded. Although the editors of *Ṣawt al-Aḥrār* and *Al-Ra'y al-'Āmm* experienced trouble with the authorities during the latter half of 1960, both publications were allowed to survive into 1961.

It is difficult to establish limits for the period in which the Iraqi Communist Party was openly active under Qassem's regime, since it was always in evidence, while it was never legal. The best yardstick may be to equate this period with the legal life of its official organ, that is, from January 23, 1959, to September 30, 1960.

* * *

Between June and December 1960 a clandestine broadcasting station calling itself *Ṣawt al-Sha'b* ("Voice of the People") appeared on the air intermittently. Two spells of activity can be distinguished, the first in June-July, the second in November-December⁴⁸. The station followed in detail the line taken by the communists since the summer of 1959.

Ṣawt al-Sha'b Radio went off the air after 1960. Probably its sponsors found that the provocation offered to Qassem by its existence and the difficulties of its operation outweighed its possible usefulness.

* * *

By the beginning of 1960 the second stage in the government's campaign to wrest the trade unions and the peasants societies from the communist grip had been reached. Now the basic units of the local unions and peasants societies could start, under anti-communist guidance, to oust the communist leadership at the higher levels.

⁴⁸ For samples of monitored broadcasts see *SWB*, June 27, 30, July 16, Dec. 1, 3, 10, 1960.

While the communist leadership of the GFTU appeared to have reached a *modus vivendi* with Qassem (see above, pp. 239–40), its position was being undermined from below. The main points of attack were two of the strongest of the constituent trade unions, the Railway Workers and the Port Workers unions⁴⁹. Both railways and ports were government-owned and headed by retired army officers, who were commonly employed in the senior civil service and in general were strongly anti-communist.

The ICP had complained of “difficulties” put in the way of these unions in the autumn of 1959, mainly in the form of arbitrary dismissals of communist functionaries under a variety of pretexts⁵⁰. By about February 1960 a systematic campaign was under way to displace the communist leadership of the unions by non-partisans enjoying the trust of the employers—by “yellow” functionaries, in fact. The motives which inspired the authorities were in part the general policy of breaking communism in the country; but there were definite complaints to act on. The communist trade union officers neglected their work, tried to coerce their fellow-workers, arrogated management functions to themselves, showed disrespect to officials who were not to their liking and taught others to do so, inspired an atmosphere of unrest, slackness and indiscipline. The charges were detailed and plausible⁵¹.

The means employed by the government for the removal of the communists were unscrupulous. Political dismissals were resumed on a massive scale. They affected both the membership of union committees and the communist rank and file, the former in order to paralyse union work, the latter to bring home to the generality of employees the penalties for professing communism. Union members were encouraged to express lack of confidence in their committees, or to “depose” them outright. Union

⁴⁹ At the beginning of 1960 there were about 280,000 GFTU members organized in forty-four trade unions, following upon a number of amalgamations. The membership of the main unions was (*Iraqi Review*, Feb. 24, 1960):

Workers' Union	No. of Members
Building and Construction	69,500
Oil	16,000
Municipal	15,000
Railway	13,000
Port	9,500
Electricity	6,000
Post and Telegraph	5,800

⁵⁰ A survey of these troubles appeared in *IS*, March 11, 1960.

⁵¹ For the case against the communist union leaders, see *IT*, July 11, 12, Sept. 1, 1960.

offices were closed under pretexts which ranged from charges of physical sabotage to the requirements of space allotments. When elections for new committees were due, supposed supporters of communist candidates were kept out of the polling stations by trickery or force, or their votes were falsified. The police and the CID cooperated openly with the employers.

The communist counter-measures in this sphere were no more effective than they had proved in every comparable situation since the summer of 1959. Attempts were made to exclude members who lagged behind with their dues from the voting registers, that is, members who could be presumed indifferent to the issue. This ploy was abandoned after the Ministry of Social Affairs had vetoed such practices. When communist and pro-communist newspapers publicized their grievances they were counter-attacked by the heads of the departments concerned, and if they had aimed their charges too high were summarily suspended. Qassem received a flood of petitions. He might graciously redress limited grievances; thus he ordered the reinstatement to work of 'Alī Shukur after he had been discharged from the railways for devoting working hours to union affairs⁵². However Qassem was deaf to the basic issue. The walk-outs and go-slow strikes which occasionally took place were energetically dealt with; where physical obstruction was employed the army was called in.

The campaign to oust the communists from the union leadership soon spread to other public undertakings and to the Iraq Petroleum Company; then to the larger private firms. The pattern remained the same. In these circumstances the conclusion was inevitable: first the Railway Workers Union in May, then one union after another, including the Ports Union in September, elected "independent" committees.

Contrary to what might have been expected the communists did not boycott the new committees. Their policy towards the interlopers was described as being one of *lifadhihim*—of "exposing them." The communists lent the committees their seeming support, and in the process showed them to be incapable of advancing the workers' interests, or unwilling to do so. If this appeared an uninspiring course to adopt, the communists faced a dilemma: Qassem had again shown his tactical shrewdness in setting up a rival trade union leadership instead of suppressing trade unionism altogether as Nuri had done.

The first issue of a communist trade union organ, *Ittiḥād al-'Ummāl*, appeared in Baghdad on February 3, 1960; before the end of the year it was closed by 'Abdī.

⁵² *IT*, March 14, May 12, 1960; *ANA*, March 17 [19], 1960. 'Alī Shukur's union work was to be considered "special duty."

By spring 1960 conditions had been created for the formal wresting of control over the Peasants Federation from the communists.

During the first half of the year, between February and June, elections took place for the fourteen provincial federations. The contestants were the candidates of the established, communist, Peasants Federation on the one hand and 'Arāk al-Zigam's group on the other. The latter were victorious in all except two or three of the Kurdish provinces; Zigam himself was returned for Baghdad province with a big majority⁵³. The elections were held to the satisfaction of the NDP while the communists repeatedly charged that the authorities had interfered to secure the victory of their opponents⁵⁴.

Elections for the national federation took place on October 9. Again two lists were opposed. But a shift had taken place on the Left. Kāzīm Farḥūd had disappeared; he had been detained on 'Abdī's order for an unauthorized May 1 demonstration. The ICP did not think it opportune to replace him by another communist. His place was taken by Radām al-Kaytān, a former partisan of Zigam who had stayed with the rump NDP after its split and in consequence now counted with the Left. However, despite this change, the election results were as had been indicated on the provincial level. Only Kirkuk and Erbil returned communist or leftist members to the executive committee of the General Federation council; the remaining seats went to Zigam and his associates. With twenty-five votes in his favour—three from Baghdad and two from each of the other eleven provinces—Zigam gained an easy victory as candidate for the general chairmanship against the four votes returned for Kaytān. Kaytān appealed against the results to the Minister of the Interior on the grounds that unfair pressure had been brought to bear on his supporters and that the secrecy of the ballot had been grossly violated. The Minister rejected the appeal and declared the elections valid⁵⁵.

The question has to be asked: how were the National Democrats able to triumph over the communists in the struggle for the leadership of the peasantry? The answer that they succeeded in convincing a majority among the peasants on purely ideological grounds must be rejected. There was nothing to attract or attach the Iraqi peasant in his misery and ignorance to the band of town-bred, well-to-do, highly educated liberals who formed the backbone of the NDP. Moreover, until the late spring of 1960 the NDP had practically no countrywide organization; even afterwards local branches

⁵³ *IT*, May 6, 1960.

⁵⁴ e.g., *Ahālī*, March 15, 1960; *IS*, March 25, June 30, 1960.

⁵⁵ *IT*, Oct. 10; *Ahālī*, Oct. 13; *Zamān*, Oct. 21, 1960.

did not extend beyond the provincial capitals. Some rational element in the NDP success may have been introduced by the peasants' fear that the communists, once in power, would collectivize the land. That had certainly been ICP doctrine before the revolution, and the NDP dwelt on this prospect in the election campaigns⁵⁶. But by the autumn of 1959, when the ICP could no longer permit itself the luxury of unpopular "rigidity," the communists officially disclaimed any desire to disown the peasant in favour of the state, with the significant argument, "the peasants themselves want individual peasant property . . . and we have no will other than that of the peasantry⁵⁷."

However, probably decisive in the struggle were the known wishes of the authorities at all levels, from the provincial governor downwards, who by now made no attempt at all to hide their hatred for the communists. The peasant still felt himself very much dependent on an official's goodwill, and the political leadership of peasants societies was not after all a matter which excited him over-much. The availability of an active and dextrous anti-communist politician like Zigam was not unimportant, but it was accidental. This explanation is strengthened by the fact that the Kurdish provinces did not conform to the overall pattern. The peasants there were no more doctrinaire communists than elsewhere in Iraq, but as Kurds they followed the lead of their spokesmen who at the time were in accord with the communist line on general questions. The authorities failed to exert an influence as soon as community interests, in contrast to party politics, were involved.

With its exit from the communist orbit the General Federation of Peasants Societies and its constituents ceased to play a role in Qassem's Iraq, political or otherwise.

* * *

The professional associations generally returned communist-orientated committees at their 1960 elections. These included the Engineers Society and the Writers League. In April 1960 the second congress of the Journalists Association confirmed its incumbent leftist executive; the communist and leftist press, though by then much subdued, was still practically unimpaired in number. However, as the year advanced the communist leadership met with mounting difficulties from the authorities as well as from the anti-communist members of the associations. The same applied to

⁵⁶ See Gabbay, pp. 23-4; *Ahali*, Jan. 3, 1960.

⁵⁷ Zakī Khayrī, "Report on Agrarian Reform," V, *Iraqi Review*, May 25, 1960.

the Students Federation. The elimination of the communist lead from the professional sector was deferred until 1961.

The exceptions were the Bar Association, which had registered its anti-communist vote in September 1959 (see above, p. 242), and in October 1960 re-elected its nationalist president 'Abd al-Razzāq Shabīb with a big majority, and the Economists Association, which in December 1960 evicted its pro-communist committee and elected as chairman the candidate of the anti-communist list.

The elections for the second congress of the Iraqi Teachers Union deserve detailed mention. They provide one of the few instances where statistical material is available to throw light on the political sympathies of an important sector of Iraqi public opinion, province by province, at a time when there was a certain balance of forces and some founded hope for positive constitutional development.

According to the constitution of the Teachers Union no general congress should have been elected until 1961. But dissensions within made the communist-leftist leadership desirous of having its position confirmed at an early date. The elections took place on February 13, 1960, through the provincial constituencies: the list receiving the greatest number of votes in each province was to return the delegates of that province to the general congress, all other lists remaining without representation.

The same country-wide lists were presented as in 1959, the pro-communist Unified Professional List and the pro-nationalist United Educational Front. The NDP had considered setting up a list of its own, but in the end advised its supporters among the teachers to vote "for each candidate on his merits"⁵⁸.

About 27,000 teachers voted. The results are shown overleaf⁵⁹.

Out of a total of 500 seats at the congress the pro-communist list received 453 or 91 per cent, the anti-communist list 26 or 5 per cent and the "Independent" but certainly anti-communist Kirkuk list (see below), 21 seats or 4 per cent. Because there were two provinces where single lists appeared unopposed no country-wide total of votes is meaningful.

It appears from the table that about 5,000 votes were blank or invalid.

An appreciation of the results must note that for the region along the Upper Euphrates, the heartland of Arab *qawmiyya* in Iraq, no pro-communist list would have been tolerated, though the elections took place a bare four months after the abortive attempt on Qassem's life by Ba'this. Conversely, for the Kurdish provinces to countenance the anti-communist list

⁵⁸ *Ahālī*, Feb. 24, 1960.

⁵⁹ Collated from *Bilād*, Feb. 14, 1960, and *IT*, Feb. 15, 17, 1960.

ELECTIONS TO THE SECOND CONGRESS OF THE IRAQI TEACHERS UNION
FEBRUARY, 1960

PROVINCE	UPL			UEF			INDEPENDENT		
	Votes	%	Delegates	Votes	%	Delegates	Votes	%	Delegates
Baghdad	3,975	53	161	3,537	47				
Basra	1,286	63	43	750	37				
Nasiriya	699	65	20	333	35				
Amara	622	63	22	367	37				
Diwaniya	683	90	20	76	10				
Hilla	787	65	26	410	35				
Kut	(unopposed)		18						
Karbala	541	58	20	400	42				
Ramadi				754	100	26			
Diyala	700	54	21	598	46				
Kirkuk	400	33					800	67	21
Mosul	1,683	55	64	1,313	45				
Sulaimaniya	(unopposed)		20						
Erbil	616	100	18						
Total			453			26			21

with its association of Arab nationalism was equally impossible, while Kurdish teachers found no difficulty in voting for the communist interest. The anti-communist list made a poor showing in the Shi'i south, where Arab nationalism was associated with Sunni hegemony. In Baghdad and Mosul the factions were fairly balanced, in accordance with the age-old character of these centres. In Kirkuk the July 1959 massacres had evidently robbed the pro-communist list of all chances of victory in February 1960. On the other hand, the strong non-Arab sector made it advisable for the anti-communists to appear as "Independents," rather than under an identifiable Arab-nationalist label.

Significant in a different way is the absence of an NDP list. That this party of intellectuals did not think it worthwhile at this stage to compete for the teachers' vote must be regarded as an indicator both of the party's absence of vitality and of the future of constitutionalism in Iraq.

The results were greeted with satisfaction by the communist press, qualified by regrets that the victory had not been greater; for this the blame was laid on the NDP which, the ICP claimed, should have come out unequivocally against the common adversary.

The second congress of the Teachers Union convened at Baghdad from February 23–27, 1960. It was again effusively greeted by Qassem. Three safe leftists were elected president and vice-presidents of the union. Significantly, ‘Aziz al-Shaykh was dropped from the executive; a founding member of the ICP was by the end of February 1960 a liability even for the communist-orientated Teachers Union.

There was no organized opposition in the congress. The representatives from Ramadi withdrew from the sessions amidst a spate of mutual accusation of obstructionism and foul play⁶⁰. The demonstrated incapability to coexist provides additional significance to the episode.

* * *

The three communist front organizations proper, the Peace Partisans, the Women’s League and the Federation of Democratic Youth, were on the defensive and suffered from official harassings—especially in the provinces—which barely left them room to operate within the law. On the other hand, Qassem in person addressed them at their annual congresses or on other outstanding occasions in terms of the most flattering good will.

To explain this divergence of attitude as deliberate policy would probably be as incorrect as to see in it a loosening of Qassem’s grip on government. Qassem was not emotionally involved in the anti-communist hysteria which had swept the police and civil service since the communist recession of mid-1959, and it suited him to let the communists regard him as an anchor of hope in a hostile world. But there are no signs that in 1960–61 Qassem did not subscribe to the policy of liquidating the remaining positions of strength which the communists still held.

One incident, trivial in itself, deserves to be recorded as characteristic.

At its second congress, in March 1960, the Iraqi League for the Defence of Women’s Rights changed its name to the League of Iraqi Women. The news was announced by Qassem himself in his opening address: “Today this [i.e. the former] name is gone, and it is replaced by another name, according to your wishes.” To what extent the members’ wishes had been consulted was made clear by his next sentence: “If you wish to use the singular you will call it the League of Iraqi Woman. But if you wish to use the plural, then you will call it the League of Iraqi Women⁶¹.”

⁶⁰ *Zamān*, March 3, 1960.

⁶¹ *Bilād*, March 9, 1960. There is no doubt that the public noted such fatuities as much as Qassem’s failures in action.

The reason for the change, Qassem's idea of course, was that under the republic a voluntary organization to defend women's rights could no longer be necessary.

During 1960 many prominent fellow-travellers who still retained high positions in the civil service were replaced by career officials without a political background. Outstanding cases were those of Dhanūn Ayyūb, the Director-General of Broadcasting and Television, Kāzim Samāwī, the director of broadcasting and Dr. Šiddiq al 'Aṭrūshī, the Director-General of Education.

* * *

In the meantime the communists were driven off the streets as nationalism had been a year earlier. The differences in the operation stemmed mainly from a fundamental distinction: the "Red Terror" of 1959 had been one aspect of a nation-wide offensive in the drive for political power. The anti-communist terror which followed was retributive; it remained uncoordinated and with no direct objective except the settling of accounts.

There was no counterpart to the PRF in and after 1960. Despite its high-handed practices, the PRF had imposed a modicum of order—even efficiency; now greater leeway was afforded for individual hooliganism. On the other hand, the non-political public no longer had much to fear—if the narrow borderline between political and common crime may be ignored—while during the Red Terror of 1959 none had felt safe unless he was at least known to be a fellow-traveller. There were no outbreaks of mass killings as at Mosul after the Shawwāf revolt and at Kirkuk four months later, but the murder of single communists became an ordinary occurrence. Lastly, the incidence of the anti-communist terror remained circumscribed geographically; by and large it was restricted to Mosul and its neighbourhood, to Kirkuk, to the Upper Euphrates region from Fal-luja upstream and to the nationalist quarters of Baghdad like Karkh and, above all, A'zamīyya.

The police made no obvious efforts to protect the attacked; a strong impression is gained that they were pleased with the turn of events, and rather than attempting to prosecute the offenders were on guard against communist reprisals. However, the communists do not seem to have considered taking the law into their own hands. No reaction beyond reproachful descriptions of the outrages in their press and appeals to Qassem—all familiar by now—may be detected. Qassem did not stir.

One incident stands out. In the evening of May 1, 1960, a multitude of people who had taken part in the May Day processions streamed over Shuhadā'—the Martyrs'—Bridge into the nationalist quarter of Karkh.

When they reached Shuhadā' Square nearby, they came under concentrated fire from rooftops and windows, and fled back in a panic, leaving behind at least five dead and scores of wounded. Curfew was immediately imposed, and order restored. An energetic proclamation of 'Abdī for once exonerated the communists, instead blaming "hired groups and puppets of imperialism" who had wantonly attacked citizens as they returned "happy and delighted" on their day of rejoicing⁶². But no culprits were brought to justice.

* * *

A short time after the communists and the public at large had realized that the ICP would not attain legality, Anastas Mikoyan, First Deputy Prime Minister of the Soviet Union, visited Iraq as a guest of state. He came, it was announced, for the inauguration of the Soviet Industrial Exhibition in Baghdad. The visit lasted from April 8 to April 16, 1960. Mikoyan had several meetings with Qassem, described as "cordial"; he was shown the sights of Baghdad and taken to Basra. He received a glowing welcome from the communist press and from the multitudes who awaited him along his routes waving banners in honour of Soviet-Iraqi friendship. Perhaps to restore the balance he was baited at his press conference on the day of his departure by Yūnis al-Ṭā'ī, publisher of *al-Thawra*, about past Soviet support to Israel; Mikoyan took these historical allusions with very bad grace⁶³. Already at Basra the authorities, since the 1959 crisis more aggressively anti-communist than those of Baghdad, had rough-handed the masses who had turned out to greet the guest⁶⁴.

It is permissible to assume that Mikoyan came to Iraq on behalf of the Soviet government in order to form an opinion of Qassem's stand against the ICP and its aims. If this assumption is true, then his conversations with Qassem must have persuaded him to leave well alone, or to cut his losses. Until the downfall of the regime Soviet publications treated Qassem much as the ICP had done since August 1959. They criticized, they deplored; but they never forgot to stress that Qassem was "objectively anti-imperialist" and, by implication, the lesser evil among practicable alternatives.

⁶² *IT*, May 4, 1960.

⁶³ *IT*, April 17, 1960.

⁶⁴ Complaint in *Izvestiya*, April 15, 1960—*Mizan*, Jan. 1961, p. 8.

CHAPTER 22 THE CONSTITUTIONALISTS UNDER THE ASSOCIATIONS LAW

The notification of the National Democratic Party was submitted by Muḥammad Ḥadīd, Kāmil Chaderchi having been in self-imposed retirement since his return from Moscow. Thirteen founding members and 111 supporters signed with Ḥadīd¹. Of the founding members no less than ten gave their occupation as lawyer, one—Ḥadīd—as politician, one as merchant, one as journalist and one—Zigam—as peasant; it was a true mirror of the party's social background.

The outline of party aims appended to the notification carried no surprises². It upheld the "sovereignty of the law" and the liberty of political activity. Its constitutional programme in the narrower sense foresaw a parliamentary regime on the basis of free and direct elections. In the foreign field the party favoured an Arab Federation to be achieved in stages and by democratic means. A special section was devoted to equality for women.

The Minister of the Interior raised no objections to the constitution of the NDP as outlined.

It cannot be said that the licensing of the NDP galvanized it into a new phase of hectic action. Since the revolution its leaders had never been obstructed in anything they wished to do for their party. In any case, they had little flair for appealing to the masses or organizing them. However, during the short period before the first general convention was due to be held, additional NDP newspapers started to appear in the provinces, and party branches were constituted in most of the provincial capitals.

At the time of its May convention *al-Ahālī* reported the number of registered party members as 2,178³.

The NDP ranked high in the political tradition of Iraq. It represented a main trend in the thought and feeling of the intelligentsia. The characters and gifts of its leaders were highly esteemed. The party was widely believed to be in special favour with Qassem, and no breath of disloyalty attached

¹ *Bilād*, Jan. 10, 1960.

² *Al-Thaqāfa al-Jadida*, Feb. 1960, pp. 125-9.

³ *Ahālī*, May 12, 1960.

to it so far. The new, constitutional experiment, which the NDP above all other parties stood for, could not as yet be judged a failure. In view of all these assets the low number of NDP members must be considered a disastrous indicator of the political maturity and volition of the Iraqi public.

* * *

To all outward appearances, during the early months of 1960 the NDP pursued, under the direction of Ḥadīd, a course distinctly hostile to the ICP and in full accord with the measures being taken by the government to thwart communist aspirations.

However, Ḥadīd's leadership and his policy did not go unchallenged, although for some time the signs were not too obvious. Chaderchi had resolved to resume the active leadership of the NDP⁴. His place in the party was so assured that he might have had his wish for the asking, had he not associated it with his total negation of the stand which the party had taken on the most fundamental issue of all. The point in dispute, in Ḥadīd's succinct formulation, was, "Does our new regime deserve support, or not⁵?" Ḥadīd's answer was that it did deserve support; Chaderchi's, that it did not.

This question had faced the NDP from the beginnings of the regime; nor was there anything new in the respective attitudes of the party chairman and his deputy. The crisis now impending had been caused in part through the challenge of the Associations Law, in part by an accumulation of grievances against Qassem to which Ḥadīd and his supporters did not seem to pay sufficient notice. Yet it was the personal factor which played a decisive role in the new situation. Chaderchi, ever a very vain man, now felt the additional exasperation of the veteran superseded by his junior. Indeed, Chaderchi had himself relinquished his place to Ḥadīd in a fit of peevishness, but now the younger man took an independent line which he knew to be offensive to the father of the party.

It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that in Chaderchi's view the prime function of an active political party was to oppose any regime that did not observe the rules of parliamentary constitutionalism. He could not say so quite openly, but he came near enough. "We stand urgently in need of a party which can feel its independence so as to view things from an

⁴ The following is based on *al-Ahālī* and *al-Bayān* which from the end of April to the end of May thrashed out the differences between the two factions almost daily in their leading articles.

⁵ *Bayān*, May 12, 1960.

objective perspective"; "the people have for a long time now, since last year, been missing the role which the NDP ought to play in the form of effective contribution to the country's political life on the democratic bases that have been consistently pursued by the party since its inception in 1946⁶." It is typical of his attitude that, in the reference to the party's road "since its inception in 1946," the 14th July revolution found no place; evidently Chaderchi drew little distinction between Nuri and Qassem. He was critical of the NDP's cooperation "since last year" with the government against the communists. All he saw in the communists, it appears, was that they were a "popular" and "patriotic" force opposing a military administration. Chaderchi went so far as openly to deplore that misguided "juveniles" of his own party had—during his absence abroad—lent themselves to fight on behalf of a regime that suppressed party activity, against a party that stood for it⁷.

Nothing would be more incorrect than to regard Chaderchi as a conscious fellow-traveller or crypto-communist in the light of such statements. He was an honest liberal progressive. But his mind as a politician had been formed in the *Front Populaire* atmosphere of the early 1930s which prevailed among the opposition in Iraq until the revolution of 1958. By then Chaderchi was an elderly man and very ill, and he could no longer adapt himself to a radically changed situation.

It was different with Ḥusayn Jamīl. He was younger than Chaderchi. As Minister of Guidance he had run into frontal collision with the ICP and the problem the communists posed for the republic. He could not, and did not, deny that the danger had been real in the past, and that the NDP cooperation with Qassem had therefore been necessary and justified. But he did argue, with much plausibility, that the teeth of the dragon had now been drawn. Second only to Chaderchi as spokesman of the fighters for constitutional devolution, he too could no longer put his trust in cooperation with Qassem.

Ḥadīd's attitude was that fundamentally the republican regime had not disappointed the hopes it had inspired at the time of the revolution. Much had been achieved. Much was still amiss, but the best way to rectify matters was to assist the government by positive, though not uncritical, cooperation. The communist assault on the republic had forged bonds of blood brotherhood between the regime and the NDP. The NDP, he felt, should regard with pride a link which had not outgrown its use. The supreme sin in the circumstances was "negativity,"

⁶ *Nahj al-Ahālī*, April 23—*IT*, May 15, 1960.

⁷ *Ahālī*, May 20, 1960.

escape into an opposition which was meaningless and devoid of influence, a detachment from reality.

Once Chaderchi had decided to reassert his leadership, Ḥadīd's difficulties within the NDP rapidly increased. He tried to surmount them by rallying the majority he held inside the founding committee. Shortly after the party had been licensed he asked the committee in a plenary session to endorse his stay in the Cabinet, and received ten votes out of the fourteen. There were two noes and two qualified assents. The dissenting members were Ḥusayn Jamīl and Muḥṣir al-'Azzāwī, the hedgers were Ḥmūd and 'Alī 'Awād al-Najm. The vote proved irrelevant. Chaderchi was a law unto himself. He increased his pressure for a fundamental reassessment of policy, the first pledge of which was to be Ḥadīd's resignation from Qassem's government. He made it known that he might accept the active chairmanship of the party at the forthcoming convention, due under the Associations Law before May 10, but he would not do so unless his conditions were met. The threat worked; a National Democratic Party keeping Kāmil Chaderchi in unwilling retirement over a difference of policy was inconceivable. The crisis broke at a meeting of the committee on April 23. Amid stormy scenes and recriminations the committee melted away. Chaderchi's partisans again resigned. Ḥadīd and his closest friends—Khaddūrī, Sa'dūn, Samḥirī, Salmān al-'Azzāwī and Zigam—not merely resigned from the committee, but "withdrew" from the party altogether⁸.

On the same day Ḥadīd sent Qassem his resignation from the Cabinet. He expressed his pride at having been able to serve with Qassem's "continuous support and invaluable assistance," but "disputes" within the NDP which had become public knowledge forced him to resign. Qassem replied in a cordial message, but did not accept the resignation as yet. Ḥadīd remained decided, however, and on May 3 his acting successor was announced.

A side effect of the crisis overtook *al-Ahālī*. 'Abdallāh 'Abbās, the publisher-editor, had already resigned on March 21; he could not make up his mind which side to take in the struggle and was soon to withdraw from all party activity. Ḥadīd was still strong enough to secure as successor a confirmed supporter of his, Salmān al-'Azzāwī. Salmān's tenure was short; on the fateful April 23 he threw up his office together with his committee membership. In the resulting confusion *al-Ahālī* ceased to appear for a few days. On April 28 a new publisher-editor was appointed, this time a staunch follower of Chaderchi, Muḥṣir al-'Azzāwī; he edited the organ of the rump party until its next crisis in 1961.

⁸ For the vote, see *IT*, April 27, 1960.

Ḥadīd and his friends had "withdrawn" from the NDP. Evidently they did not regard themselves as having seceded, for they mustered all their strength for the party convention which took place in Baghdad on May 5-6. But how far the party had already split in practice was demonstrated when on April 27 the faction first issued the daily *al-Bayān* as its own organ⁹. Muḥammad al-Sa'dūn signed as publisher and Salmān al-'Azzāwī, late of *al-Ahālī*, as editor.

The convention opened in the afternoon of May 5. Chaderchi acted as chairman, although in practice Jamīl took over on his behalf. Soon pandemonium broke loose. Since there were no properly constituted delegations, every registered member was allowed entrance and a vote. The difficulty was to decide whose claim to party membership was genuine. Thousands of applications for membership had not yet been settled, and provided grounds for strife. Outside the hall a multitude of would-be members shouted for admittance and were dispersed by the police at the request of the convention managers. This provided sufficient reason for Ḥadīd to insist that they were his supporters being kept out by foul play. Inside, charges and counter-charges were bandied about concerning the qualifications of the eleven hundred who had managed to get past the doors; the leaders accused each other of having faked identity papers. Each side put up its own list for election to the executive committee. When it became clear that the majority of the assembly present would vote for Chaderchi, Ḥadīd and Khaddūrī walked out, followed by all their supporters. Chaderchi thereupon received 789 votes for himself and his candidates, without opposition. The allocation of offices was: Chaderchi, chairman; Ḥmūd, vice-chairman; Jamīl, secretary-general; Muḥzir al-'Azzāwī, deputy secretary-general; 'Alī 'Awād al-Najm, treasurer¹⁰.

Then the supervising judge declared the elections invalid. He ruled that at the time of the voting no quorum had been present. Since the voting had lasted into the small hours of Friday, May 6, the judge refused the chairman's request that new elections take place "on the morrow," as an adjournment to the same day was not permissible. On this note the convention concluded.

The elected executive immediately appealed to the Minister of the Interior against the ruling of the supervising judge; Ḥadīd and his supporters submitted a request to have it upheld. The minister confirmed the ruling; the NDP appealed to the Court of Cassation. On May 24, the court re-

⁹ *Al-Bayān* had been the name of an Ahālī organ in 1936.

¹⁰ *Ahālī*, May 9, 10, 1960.

jected the Minister's decision and declared the elections of the executive committee to have been valid¹¹.

It is not unfair to suggest that the Minister of the Interior and the Court of Cassation were both influenced by political considerations. Brig. Yahyā, acting on Qassem's behalf, decided in favour of the loyal and against the rebellious faction. The Judges of Appeal, sensing correctly that Qassem would not lightly violate their immunity, supported the proven constitutionalists, and by doing so vented their spite against a military ruler whose prestige had long since been on the decline.

* * *

With the confirmation in office of Chaderchi and his supporters the rupture was almost complete. On June 2 Ḥadīd and thirty-four of his political friends were expelled from the NDP, after reports had already appeared in the press that they were considering founding a party of their own¹². On June 29 Ḥadīd notified the Minister of the Interior of the formation of a new party, to be called the National Progressive Party (NPP). His thirteen co-founders were without exception former NDP members. The programme submitted was similar point for point to that of the NDP in January; this was hardly surprising since the only difference between the two parties not caused by personal conflicts, their attitude towards the regime, could not be included in the programme¹³. On July 29 the NPP received legal sanction. *Al-Bayān* became the party organ.

¹¹ *IT*, May 18, 20, 25, 1960.

¹² *Ahālī*, June 3, 1960; *IT*, May 30, 1960.

¹³ *IT*, June 30, 1960.

CHAPTER 23 THE KURDS UNDER THE ASSOCIATIONS LAW

The notification of the United Democratic Party of Iraqi Kurdistan was submitted by Mullā Muṣṭafā Barzani; Ibrāhīm Aḥmad, secretary-general of the party, was the second signatory. Despite the links of the illustrious chairman, all—or almost all—of the founders and fifty supporters seem to have been detribalized, to judge by their occupations. This was predictable. Among the supporters were many teachers, a characteristic feature of the UDPK. One supporter was a dental technician, which must have been something of a novelty¹.

The programme submitted with the notification contained twenty-three sections². The expected aims of equality of rights and opportunities for Kurds in the administrative, economic and cultural spheres were stated. Of special interest were section 3, which affirmed that “in its political struggle and social analyses the party applies the scientific viewpoint of Marxism-Leninism”; section 21, which mentioned a “guarantee”—not further specified—of the rights of all minor nationalities settled in Kurdistan; and section 23, which pledged support for “the struggle of the Kurdish people in the various parts of Kurdistan for their liberation from the imperialist and reactionary yoke, and for their right of self-determination.” On the other hand, section 6 condemned chauvinism and separatism which were bracketed with “cosmopolitan” ideas. The most important clause of the party platform was tucked away in the middle of section 6; it was the ambition “to broaden the national rights of the Kurdish people on the basis of self-government within the unity of Iraq, to be recognized by the Permanent Constitution.”

The internal regulation of the party provided for a structure modelled on that of the ICP. They are remarkable for the establishment of membership dues related to income, which reached 6 per cent for members

¹ The full list of founders and supporters appears in *Zamān*, Jan. 10, 1960.

² *Al-Thaqāfa al-Jadīda*, Feb. 1960, pp. 129–36.

with a monthly income of ID 60–100, and an even greater percentage for higher income groups³.

At the same time the party underwent a change of name. The party had submitted the notification under its established name of the United Democratic Party of Iraqī Kurdistan, *al-ḥizb al-dimūqrāṭī al-muwahḥad li-kurdistān al-irāq*. Qassem disliked the all-embracing implication of “United” and the regional implication of “Kurdistan.” At his instigation Brig. Yaḥyā suggested at a meeting with Mullā Muṣṭafā and Ibrāhīm Aḥmad the name *al-ḥizb al-dimūqrāṭī al-kurdī*, the Kurdish Democratic Party, instead. Mullā Muṣṭafā was ready to drop “United,” but not “Kurdistan.” Yaḥyā referred to Qassem, and at another interview Qassem in person offered *al-ḥizb al-dimūqrāṭī al-kurdistānī*, the Kurdistanī Democratic Party, a compromise which was accepted⁴. Qassem’s quibble was not devoid of meaning. To his Arabic sense for niceties of language “Kurdistanī” was more innocuous and less evocative of political consequences than an “Iraqī Kurdistan,” in contrast with and complementary to other parts of Kurdistan ruled from foreign capitals.

The Minister of the Interior also stipulated further alterations, although significantly these too were suggested informally and did not, therefore, postpone the licensing of the party. The “viewpoint of Marxism-Leninism” was rejected; also the aim of self-government and the declaration of solidarity with the brethren everywhere in Kurdistan fighting for self-determination. Mention of the “guarantee” for the non-Kurdish minorities in Kurdish areas was obliterated; evidently the minister considered such a declaration to be fraught with political consequences. The expression “Kurdish people” was changed to “Kurds” or “Kurdish nationality” wherever it appeared; “Kurdistan” was similarly replaced by a circumlocution.

* * *

One of the objections of the Minister of the Interior received support from an ally whom he would not have expected. After the programme had been submitted, the central committee of the ICP addressed a letter to its KDP counterpart congratulating its patriotic comrades on their

³ *Al-minhāj wa'l-nizām al-dākhili li-l-ḥizb al-dimūqrāṭī al-kurdistānī (parti dimūqrāṭī kurdistān)*, 1960, a KDP publication. The first part contains the party programme as amended at the request of Brig. Yaḥyā. An English translation by H.W. Glidden appeared in *MEJ*, XV, no. 4, pp. 445–59.

⁴ Private information.

step, but asking them to remove the Marxist-Leninist references; "otherwise friendly relations between the two parties will become impossible"⁵: the ICP, far from feeling flattered by the imitation, regarded it as poaching on communist preserves.

However, the excisions of Brig. Yaḥyā did not produce the final version of the legal KDP programme. At the fifth party congress on May 5–10, 1960, amendments were carried which went far to restore the Kurdish-nationalist spirit. The term "Kurdistan" was restored; "self-government" returned in the form of "the lawful aspirations of Kurdish nationalism"; several requests on cultural matters, removed or watered down by the minister, were uncompromisingly restated⁶. The Marxist clause did not appear. Qassem and Yaḥyā seem to have acquiesced in the changes.

Otherwise the fifth congress was of little note. One hundred and sixty-eight delegates were said to represent seven thousand party members. Mullā Muṣṭafā was re-elected chairman, and Ibrāhīm Aḥmad secretary. The ritual of loyal addresses to the Faithful Leader was observed⁷. Qassem cannot be said to have reciprocated: while the congress was sitting he received in audience, amidst publicity, delegations from the Surchi and Herki tribes, the traditional rivals of the Barzanis and among their enemies in the campaign to come⁸. There can be no doubt that Mullā Muṣṭafā saw the gesture at this particular moment as a deliberate slight.

* * *

The muffled wrestling over the party programme at the beginning of the year had ended in another short-term victory for Qassem, which in the long run was to cost him dear. This episode, according to the KDP secretary, had "finally convinced the party that Qassem wished to convert it into a cultural society devoted to his own support"⁹. It was not an unreasonable conclusion, and the uninterrupted deterioration of relations between Qassem and the KDP which led into the abyss of civil war may be regarded as having started then.

⁵ Private information.

⁶ Appended to *Minhāj*, etc.

⁷ *IT*, May, 6, 8, 11, 1960.

⁸ *IT*, May 9, 1960.

⁹ Private information.

CHAPTER 24 THE RELIGIOUS PARTIES UNDER THE ASSOCIATIONS LAW

On February 2, 1960, two notifications were forwarded to the Minister of the Interior concerning two political parties hitherto unknown in Iraq¹. Both were clearly motivated by the desire to secure for Islam the dominating position in public life. Another common denominator was the obscurity of their founding members. The parties were entitled the Iraqi Islamic Party and the Tahrīr ("Liberation") Party.

To judge by the names of its founding members, the Islamic Party included Shi'is as well as Sunnis. The first name on the founders' list was that of Ibrāhīm 'Abdallah Shihāb, who soon ceased to be active on behalf of the party; the second signatory was Nu'mān 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Sāmarrā'i, who assumed, in practice at least, the position of party leader. The programme of the party—when first submitted it was termed *dustūr*, "constitution"—envisaged a state ordered according to the precepts of Islam, and a government whose legitimacy depended on its observance of this principle. Atheism, and especially communism, must be suppressed. Arab unity, in whatever form, was possible only if based on the same premises. These aims were considered compatible with popular elections to a consultative council and referenda on crucial issues. The consultative council was to elect the president of the state, who would appoint from among its members both his Cabinet and the legislative council².

It might have been expected that the regime would not take kindly to a party advocating a theocracy. The familiar series of objections and explanations began. The Minister of the Interior asked that the two-part "constitution" of the party be henceforth described as the "programme" and "regulations," respectively. The request may have been mere pedantry; more likely, Yaḥyā, or Qassem, held that the state had a sole right to the term *dustūr*, and that its capture by a religious party would be dangerous. Other objections involved items which were, according to the minister, at

¹ *Zamān*, Feb. 3, 1960.

² Tuetsch, "A Report on Iraq" (*Swiss Review of World Affairs*, March 1961, p. 26).

variance with section 4 of the Associations Law (see above, p. 265). The founders replied, but at the end of March the minister finally rejected the notification. He again based his decision on section 4. The proposed party, he asserted, was in opposition to the republican system; moreover, it was at variance with "the modern spirit," as well as the precepts of Islam. Lastly, the minister claimed to have been informed that the founders maintained relations with foreign elements of a character not countenanced by the law—evidently an allusion to the Muslim Brethren³.

The founders appealed to the Court of Cassation, and on April 26 the Minister of the Interior was overruled. The court adjudged that the principles on which the founders took their stand were not a negation of democracy and republicanism⁴.

The Iraqi Islamic Party thereupon assumed its place as the fourth political party to be licensed under the recent law.

Yaḥyā's rejection was natural, but the annulment of his decision by the court seems just. Similar as the principles of the Islamic Party were to those of the Muslim Brethren, there is no evidence of an organizational or political connection between the two. The Islamic Party was an Iraqi body corresponding to Iraqi needs.

The troubles of the party started immediately. According to the Associations Law the Islamic Party, being licensed, was entitled to publish its own newspaper. The party therefore applied for a permit; its organ was to be called *al-Jihād* ("the Holy War"). But the permit was not granted; nor did the censorship allow the party to publish its programme and regulations. A complaint to the Minister of Guidance was of no avail. Apparently *al-Hiyād* agreed to present the party's views, but this was a stopgap arrangement. In any case that paper was soon closed by 'Abdī.

Meanwhile the Islamic Party became second to none in propagating its ideas, although it had to use the good offices of friendly newspapers. Its central theme, also expressed in a succession of memoranda to Qassem, was the Muslim's duty to fight communism, the danger of which it regarded as great as ever.

During its brief months of semi-authorized existence the Islamic Party evidently spoke for much of the political feeling in the country. Almost a year later, at the elections for the third congress of the Teachers Union in February 1961, an independent list "known to represent the Islamic Party" competed in Ramadi Province against the nationalist United Educational Front and received 465 out of almost 1,200 votes, 40 per cent of the total

³ *Akhbār*, Feb. 25, 1960; *Thawra*, April 1, 1960; *Mid. Mir.*, May 1, 1960.

⁴ *IT*, April 29; *Mid. Mir.*, May 1, 1960.

cast⁵. By then the Islamic Party was virtually paralysed by the arrest of most of its leaders. If it is also taken into account that the UEF was staunchly anti-communist, that Sunni Ramadi was certainly not a hotbed of religious fanaticism, while the teachers as a profession were not likely to view religious influence in politics with particular favour, this showing is remarkable indeed. Regrettably, from the analyst's viewpoint, this is the only known essay of the Islamic Party to contest elections.

On October 15, 1960, *al-Fayḥā'*, a Hilla weekly with a record of trouble with the authorities, published another memorandum which the Islamic Party had just handed to Qassem. It was a flaming impeachment of the regime: the nation was divided as never before. Communism was rampant, it averred, because of the assistance afforded to it by the government, openly or in secret. Criticism was suppressed, in defiance of the tenets of Islam. The economy was in shambles; the people starved, and public funds were squandered on statues. The expropriation of lands and houses was a waste as well as an offence; the government ought to expropriate the foreign oil companies instead. Social justice as understood by religion went unheeded, while atheist concepts such as "equality of women" were brandished and promoted. Finally the newspaper designated Qassem as alone accountable for this state of affairs, "for you are the Prime Minister, and the other ministers only do as you bid them"⁶. It was the most outspoken attack on the regime ever openly published inside Iraq, singular also in that not even formal deference was paid to the Faithful Leader.

Speedy retribution followed. The eleven leading members of the Islamic Party were immediately detained. The headquarters at Baghdad were closed. *Al-Fayḥā'* ceased to appear.

Although the Islamic Party as a political organization was broken, it was not yet formally disbanded; anti-communist newspapers continued to quote its occasional statements on less dangerous themes and, as noted above, it was able to figure in the Teachers Union elections early in 1961.

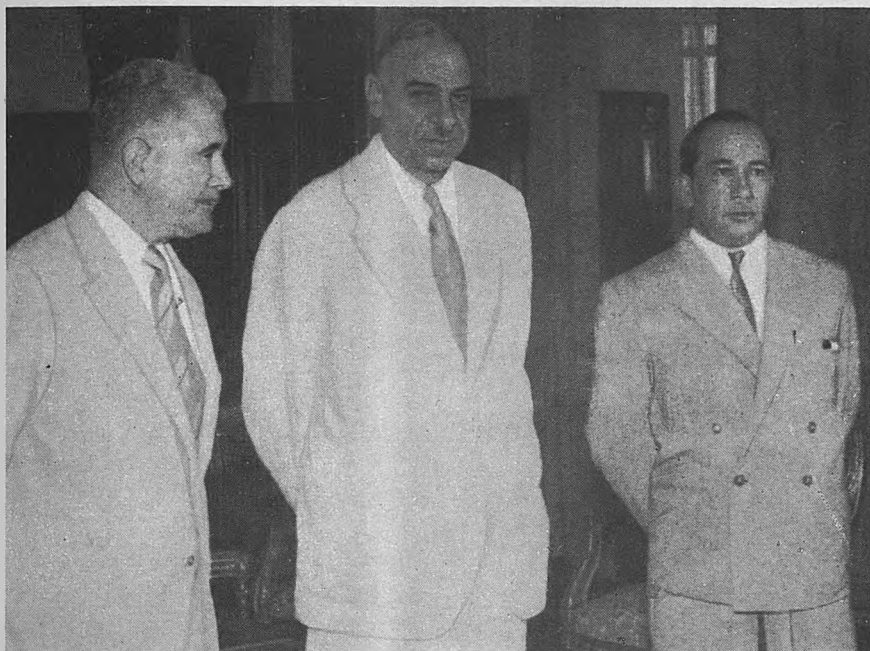
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The Tahrīr Party never came to life officially. Its name indicated that it was a sister organization to the illegal Tahrīr party of Jordan and Lebanon, which was related ideologically to the Muslim Brethren, but surpassed them in its avowed extremism. The first signature on the notification was that of 'Abd al-Jabbār 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Ḥājj, an official of Baghdad⁷.

⁵ *Ahālī*, Feb. 12, 1961.

⁶ *Hayāt*, Oct. 22, 1960, and Tuetsch, op. cit.

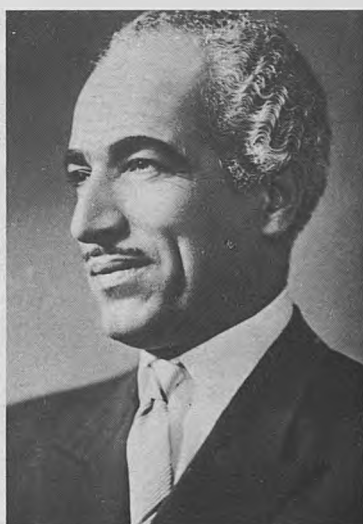
⁷ *Zamān*, Feb. 3, 1960.



The Council of Sovereignty, 1958. Left to right:
Rubay'ī (President), Muḥammad Mahdī Kubba, Naqshbandī



Maj.-General 'Abdī,
Military Governor-General



Camera Press

Brig. Yahyā,
Minister of the Interior

The Communist Leadership



Ḥusayn al-Raḍī *alias* Salām 'Ādil,



'Āmir 'Abdallah



Jamāl al-Ḥaydarī



'Azīz al-Ḥājj

The founders, all inhabitants of Baghdad, Mosul and Ramadi, were evidently Sunnis; in view of the foreign affiliations of the Tahrir Party this was natural. They too were men unknown in the political society of Iraq.

The programme was never published. It certainly resembled that of the Islamic Party in emphasizing Islam as the foundation of public life⁸.

After the exchange of objections and explanations now routine for undesirable parties, the Minister of the Interior rejected the notification on March 27. Again, the platform was held to be opposed to "the modern spirit" and to "the precepts of Islam"; also, the party "was linked with a party established outside the Iraqi Republic⁹."

The founders appealed to the Court of Cassation. The court decision, on April 29, upheld the rejection of the minister¹⁰. In this case also the ruling of the court must be held to be just. There was undoubtedly *prima facie* reason to regard the Tahrir Party as affiliated to an organization with headquarters outside Iraq, in contravention of the Associations Law.

* * *

The transitory nature of the two "religious" parties must be attributed to their inability to accept the fundamental rules which the regime imposed on that modicum of political mobility which it permitted. The absence of religious parties was not due to apathy. Political statements of religious leaders could generally count on a response. Such an instance occurred at about the time of the minister's rejection of the two notifications. Muḥsin al-Ḥakīm, the leading Shi'i divine at Najaf, issued a *fatwā* in which he attacked communism by name and asserted that it was absolutely incompatible with Islam. Copies of the epistle were soon hung in every government office throughout the Shi'i half of the country, apparently by order of Sayyid Ḥamīd Sayyid Ḥusayn, military governor of the south. They even found their way to other regions. When a communist weekly, *al-Ḥadāra*, incautiously published a cartoon depicting the divine as a donkey, shops closed in protest not merely in Najaf and Karbala, but in Baghdad also. Vigilantes in the holy cities prevented any pro-communist counter-demonstrations, including the May Day processions. Far from returning to the offensive, *Ittiḥād al-Sha'b* meekly quoted a denial by Muḥsin al-Ḥakīm that he had instigated the strike, and explained it away as the work of "gangs in no way related to religion¹¹." Once more the ICP had failed to rise to the challenge of an opponent far inferior in organized resources.

⁸ cf. also Suleiman, M., pp. 181-5.

⁹ *Ahālī*, March 28, 1960; *IT*, March 29, 1960.

¹⁰ *IT*, *Mid. Mir.*, May 1, 1960.

¹¹ *Jihād*, Jordan, April 3; *IS-IT*, April 28; *Mid. Mir.*, May 1, 1960.

CHAPTER 25 THE GOVERNMENT AND THE CONSTITUTIONAL EXPERIMENT

The return of the political parties had been anticipated as ushering in a stage of devolution to constitutional government; their establishment was certainly not considered an end in itself. This stage, as was implied and indeed delineated in Qassem's programmatic address of July 14, 1959, would include all that related to the preparation of the Permanent Constitution, its enactment and, above all, its translation into the day-to-day political life of the country.

A committee appointed by the Minister of the Interior to draft the election law for the National Assembly was proceeding with its work, and in mid-February 1960 it laid the draft before the minister¹. Thus during the first halcyon weeks of constitutionalist hopes at least one sober indication beyond the licensing of three political parties justified a qualified optimism.

The committee's draft election law is the last record of any practical move taken in the direction of representative or constitutional government under Qassem's rule. The draft was shelved.

* * *

It was an ominous sign that while the constitutionalist experiment was yet in full progress, the government lost several of its members who were genuine politicians.

The process of attenuation started on the day after the Associations Law had come into force. On January 7, a Republican Decree announced the relief of Hudayb al-Ḥājj Ḥmūd, the Minister of Agriculture, "due to [his desire] . . . to proceed with this activity [of taking part in the formation of a political party]²." Ḥmūd being a foremost leader of the NDP and especially close to Chaderchi, the reason given in the decree was undoubtedly true. Whether it was the whole truth, or whether Ḥmūd had succumbed at last to Chaderchi's prejudice against cooperating with Qassem, remains

¹ *R. Baghdad*, Feb. 20 [22], 1960.

² *IT*, Jan. 8. 1960.

an open question. By Ḥmūd's withdrawal Qassem lost a competent minister. Ḥmūd's successor in an acting capacity, Brig. Amīn, the Minister of Social Affairs, was inferior in all relevant respects except that he belonged to no party to divide his allegiance.

An indirect result of the ICP's failure to obtain a licence was Dr. Ibrāhīm Kubba's disappearance from the Cabinet. On the evening of February 16 a Republican Decree was published which "in the public interest and at the suggestion of the Prime Minister" relieved Dr. Kubba of his government posts as Minister of Agrarian Reform and Acting Minister of Oil Affairs; Brig. Yaḥyā, the Minister of the Interior, took over the former post, and Dr. Shaybānī, Minister of Planning, the latter, both in an acting capacity³. According to Baghdad gossip, Kubba had remonstrated angrily with Qassem over his treatment of the ICP application for a licence, and had threatened to resign; Qassem had prevaricated and, once Kubba had gone away, announced his dismissal.

Ibrāhīm Kubba thereafter vanished from the political scene of Iraq. He remained in obscurity until his sorry emergence under the Ba'th government, three years later, to testify against Qassem's regime.

It is significant that while Kubba, who was a free agent, jeopardized his Cabinet post by protesting on behalf of the ICP, Dr. Dulaymī, a party member and presumably under orders, stayed put.

On May 3, 1960, a Republican Decree announced that Dr. Nazīha al-Dulaymī, the Minister of Municipal Affairs, had instead been appointed Minister without Portfolio, and that Brig. Muḥī al-Dīn 'Abd al-Ḥamīd, the Minister of Education, had been transferred to the Ministry of Industry. Thus the leftist position in the Cabinet was further weakened. 'Abbās al-Baldāwī became Minister of Municipal Affairs, and Brig. Ismā'il 'Ārif Minister of Education⁴. Another decree published at the same time finally announced the resignation of Muḥammed Ḥadīd from his Cabinet posts of Minister of Finance and Acting Minister of Industry.

Qassem had avoided giving an open affront to the Left as best he could; the leftist representatives in the Cabinet were not removed, and the changes were not this time related to "the public interest." But in reality the break was sharp. For a departmental minister to be shifted to a ministry of state had signposted the way out once before under the regime, as happened with Fu'ād al-Rikābī. Baldāwī had been director-general of the ministry; he was a career civil servant and had reputedly not been on speaking terms with his communist superior. Brig. 'Abd al-Ḥamīd, though by no means

³ *Zamān*, Feb. 17, 1960.

⁴ *IT*, May 4, 1960.

a communist, had been associated with the Left by the public ever since Aref's trial. He seems to have been a weak personality. His departure from the politically important Ministry of Education was regretted by the Left, and welcomed by their enemies; at the Ministry of Industry a man of his calibre would be of no use to the ICP. Brig. Ismā'il 'Ārif, his successor, had hitherto, as commander of the Twenty-fifth Brigade at Baghdad, enjoyed the reputation of being one of Qassem's most trusted confidants. He was an energetic and competent army officer, faithful to Qassem and a ruthless enemy of the communists.

* * *

The last months of 1960 brought the final "depoliticization" of the Cabinet.

On November 15 Dr. Dulaymī and 'Awnī Yūsuf, the Minister of Works and Housing, were released from their posts⁵. The presence in the Cabinet of Dr. Dulaymī had for long been an anomaly; even at her virtual sinecure as Minister without Portfolio she could not survive the proscription of the communist press, in full progress at that very time, and the return in consequence of the ICP to underground conditions. The Kurd 'Awnī Yūsuf was a reputed crypto-communist; although in office he had not shown political partisanship—he had been an indifferent minister altogether—his removal was another blow to the prestige of the ICP.

These dismissals had been preceded on October 20 by the resignation "at his own request" of Brig. 'Abd al-Wahhāb Amīn, the Minister of Social Affairs and Acting Minister of Agriculture⁶. He had originally been appointed for his loyalty to Qassem; he was a devout Muslim and anything but a leftist. It was rumoured that he had resigned in protest against the persecution of the Islamic Party. For this reason his exit also implied a narrowing of the political basis of the regime.

The successors were all first-class specialists in their fields. Although one or two of them had made political excursions in the past, they joined Qassem's government as mere technicians.

It had been the glory of the revolution that its first Cabinet had assembled essentially the whole range of political forces in Iraq. It had taken twenty-eight months to remove the last members to hold their seats principally because they represented certain sectors of public opinion.

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⁵ *WI*, No. 444, Nov. 20, 1960, p. 1.

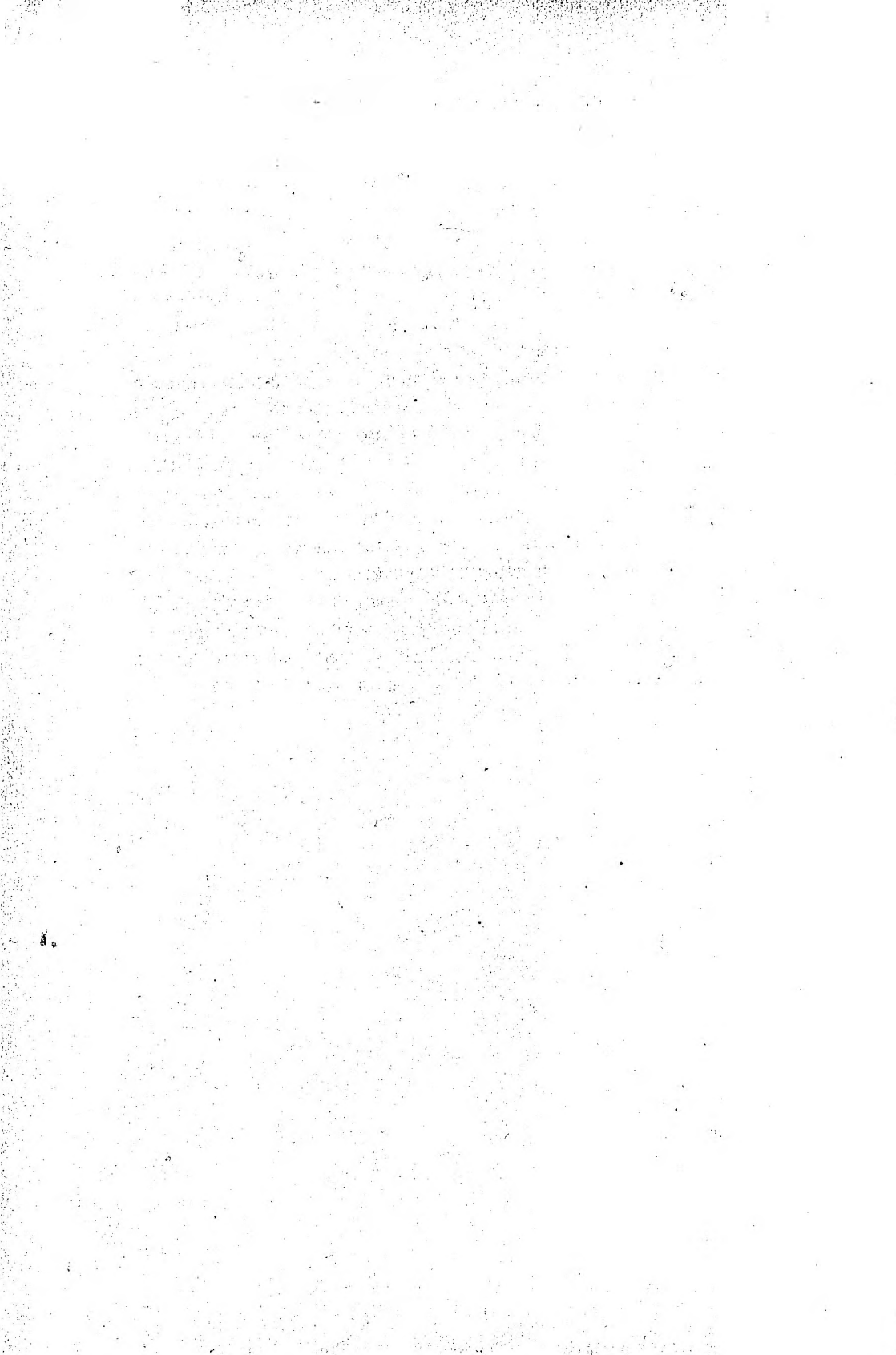
⁶ *IT*, Oct. 23, 1960; *WI*, No. 430, Oct. 26, 1960, p. 3.

Qassem put his own seal on progress towards constitutional government when he declared in the early summer of 1960 that the "period of transition" had not ended after all⁷. He continued: "Our responsibility now is to stabilize the conditions of the country . . . We want them [the people] to be well educated and merry and strong and rich. And after we have secured the safety of the people and the country we shall start with the second period, the period of elections and the permanent constitution . . ." And though he added, "I am sure that period is not far off," his confidence cannot have carried conviction in view of the formidable preamble.

No incident can be pointed out that may account for Qassem's loss of faith in devolution to constitutional government. Almost certainly no such incident was necessary. Qassem, a pragmatist and egocentric, had turned to such policy in mid-1959 when it solved the urgent problem of how to defer the hopes of the communists at the peak of their strength, without causing a breach with the regime. Aware that if he adhered to this policy he would detract from his own status, he discarded it as soon as practicable. He was aided, of course, by the feebleness of the parties, in numbers as in will power opposite an unsympathetic government.

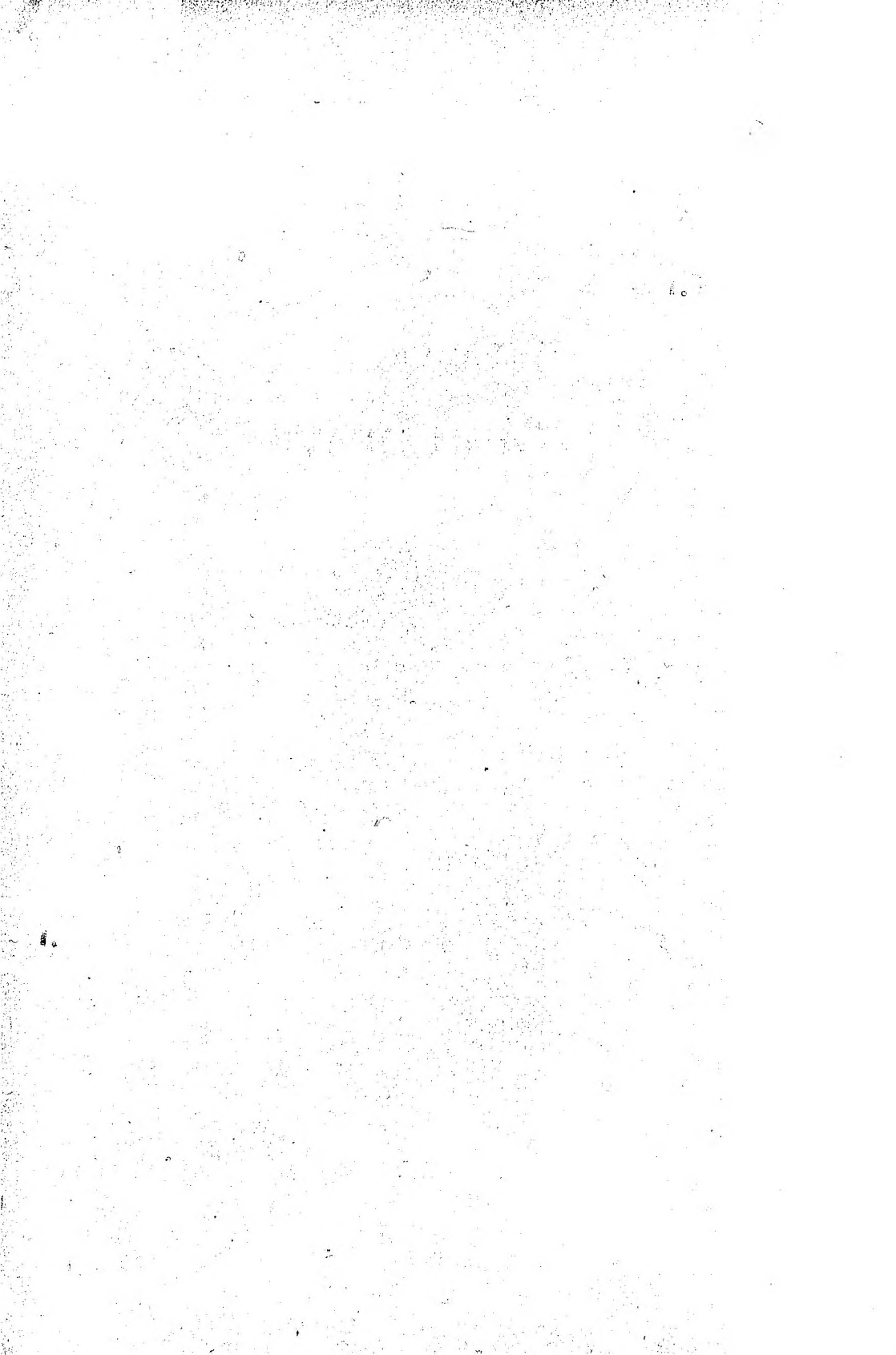
It is unlikely that the total failure of the constitutional experiment advanced Qassem's downfall; nor would a more generous attitude on Qassem's part have retarded it. But no episode of the regime sheds more sombre light on the waste and futility of the Iraqi political scene.

⁷ *IT*, June 15, 1960.



PART FOUR

DECAY AND DEATH



CHAPTER 26 THE POLITICAL PARALYSIS

The remaining thirty months of Qassem's regime were a period of stagnation. The political scene lacks focal points comparable to the themes which served for the first three parts of this work. Indeed, there are further dramatic episodes—the Kurdish insurrection, and the Kuwait crisis. The continuing deterioration of the communist position provides a thread of continuity. There are the makings of the plot which came to fruition on February 8, 1963. Qassem's declining powers of judgment are evident. But when the end came, the date was irrelevant. Whatever may have been the tactical considerations of the conspirators, or the consequences for the country, the final scene at Broadcasting House might have come two years earlier or later without entailing an essential difference to the political history of Iraq under Qassem.

* * *

The subsidence of political vitality was manifest in the changes which took place in the Cabinet and the Sovereignty Council.

On May 14, 1961, another Cabinet reshuffle was announced, the last, as it proved to be, of the regime¹. Dr. Fayṣal al-Sāmīr, the Minister of Guidance, was transferred to the Foreign Service. He was superseded, in an acting capacity, by Brig. Ismā'īl 'Ārif, the Minister of Education. Muṣṭafā 'Alī, the Minister of Justice, and 'Abbās al-Baldāwī, the Minister of Municipal Affairs, resigned "for health reasons." They were replaced by colourless civil servants.

The changes were another concession to anti-communist sentiment in the country—effectual leftist influence in the Cabinet had already been eliminated with the dismissals of Dr. Kubba and Dr. Dulaymī. But Dr. Sāmīr had never ceased to be regarded as a crypto-communist by the public at large, and his tenure of the Ministry of Guidance had become a liability. His successor was a proven and trusted communist-hater. Muṣṭafā 'Alī

¹ *Bayān*, May 14, 1961.

and 'Abbās al-Baldāwī seem to have genuinely resigned because of ill health, although 'Alī's despair of the regime and of his own part in it had for long been on record. With 'Ali, the last of the original revolution ministers left the Cabinet, Qassem himself excepted.

On October 1, 1961, a fortnight after the outbreak of the Kurdish rising had been acknowledged, the Kurd Fu'ād 'Ārif left the Cabinet, the background of his departure barely disguised by the official announcement which spoke of his "relief owing to the special conditions and his own wish²."

No further changes took place in the Cabinet before Qassem's downfall.

The Sovereignty Council also was re-formed during this period. On November 27, 1961, Khālīd al-Naqshbandī died of heart failure. His death left the President, Lt.-Gen. Rubay'ī, its sole active member. In consequence a proclamation came into force on December 1, 1961, in which Qassem, as Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, announced that the council had been reconstituted with 'Abd al-Majīd Kamūna and Rashād 'Ārif as the two new members, while Rubay'ī was retained³. Muḥammad Mahdī Kubba, never officially retired, was quietly dropped. This remained the composition of the Sovereignty Council until the regime ended, when the council was dissolved.

Qassem's attempt to preserve formal continuity in the Sovereignty Council exposes even more sharply the decline of his position. Kamūna was an Arab Shi'i and Rashād 'Ārif a Kurd, a composition similar to the original. But whereas Kubba and Naqshbandī had been well-known personalities, high in public esteem and representative of new-era politics, the new incumbents were faceless—Kamūna was a member of the Civil Service Commission and 'Ārif a judge. The formation of the first Sovereignty Council had been announced to the nation by a proclamation of the Commander-in-Chief (Proclamation No. 2), following the clarion call of the revolution itself. What had then been part of the takeover, however, had now become a testimonial to Qassem's inability to normalize the constitutional aspects of his regime.

Rubay'ī continued to go gravely through his ceremonial paces. He signed laws and Republican Decrees. He received ambassadors. He exchanged good wishes with foreign heads of state on national festivals. He spoke in public in honour of the Prophet's birthday or the opening of a girls' school, carefully refraining from any remarks of political interest. In private he expressed his longing for a release, but declared himself too

² *WI*, No. 589, Oct. 11, 1961, p. 2.

³ *Thawra*, Dec. 3, 1961.

old and too weak to hasten its advent⁴. Rubay'ī's junior colleagues do not seem to have appeared in public independently.

* * *

The standstill in constitutional development was underscored by Qassem's constant reiteration that long leaps forward could be expected. A committee for the drafting of a Permanent Constitution, of an electoral law, or of a State Council Law was about to be appointed, or had even been appointed; the Constitution would be published, and the laws enacted, within weeks or even days⁵. Qassem cannot have been entirely cynical; had he been, he would probably not have forecast details of the Constitution, such as his endorsement of the presidential character of the future regime or his declaration that only "sincere patriots" would be elected to the National Assembly⁶. In all likelihood these promises were simply instances of Qassem's growing susceptibility to self-delusion. His broodings on the present and future led him to feel that the "transitional period" ought to come to an end after all; he also felt that the time was not yet ripe. So to forecast the new order just around the corner provided an interim solution of his dilemma. The anger, derision and despair which he aroused did not touch him; some days before his end he alluded with disdain to those "who had suspended their political parties . . . because they proved unable to continue the march," and who nevertheless "were not harmed at all⁷."

* * *

Although the ICP had been definitely refused legalisation early in 1960, the party was not seriously harassed at official level for some time. However, the suppression of the party press in the last months of that year was the prelude of relentless persecution of communists by the authorities in 1961 and 1962, which stopped just short of bloodshed. After the end of 1960 communist leaders again went into hiding or exile; one at least, 'Abd al-Qādir Ismā'īl al-Bustānī, did so to escape criminal charges. Others

⁴ Rubay'ī retired unmolested after 14th Ramaḍān. He died early in 1966.

⁵ The most pathetic example is Qassem's promise on January 6, 1963—Army Day—that committees would be set up "at the end of this month, or mid-February at the latest" (*IT*, Jan. 14, 1963).

⁶ *Mid. Mir.*, July 21, 1962; *IT*, Jan. 14, 1963.

⁷ *IT*, Feb. 1, 1963.

who had failed to disappear were arrested on grounds which were often merely pretexts. Thus 'Alī Shukur, Ṣādiq al-Falāḥī and 'Abd al-Qādir 'Ayyāsh, the chief trade union leaders, were detained in 1961 for having organized and led an "illegal" May Day procession; they had requested a permit weeks in advance, but did not receive it until some hours after the event. They remained in prison until the fall of the regime⁸.

With the elimination of the leadership, organized party activity became an offence in fact as well as in law. From the end of 1960 Iraqi newspapers were overspread with notices of proceedings before the two military courts against members of "the illegal Ittīḥād al-Sha'b Party," who had been arrested while distributing propaganda material or attending clandestine meetings. The sentences entailed many years of imprisonment. At the same time the trials of communists accused of atrocities in Mosul, Kirkuk and other places during the spring and summer of 1959 continued. Death sentences were handed down indiscriminately. But they were never implemented, and Qassem stuck to his habit of abstaining from verbal attacks on the Left.

The communists fared worse at the hands of their non-official opponents. An anti-communist terror had developed since early in 1960 (see above, pp. 288-9). As a means of suppressing communist or pro-communist manifestations in public this terror soon achieved its object, save on rare occasions in the vast human cauldron of Baghdad. Individual assassinations became so numerous that by the time of Qassem's downfall it could be believed: "No communist is still alive in Mosul⁹." There is no record that the assassins were brought to justice. The communists, in line with their settled policy, organized no action to protect themselves by physical means.

* * *

The ICP did not alter its basic tenet of support for the regime. But the fiction that Qassem was the faithful leader of an adoring people could no longer be maintained. The ICP coupled the formula calling for "a democratic order" with a demand "to end the one-man rule"—evidently implying devolution but not Qassem's overthrow. The thesis of "alliance and struggle" held till the end: in March 1962 the ICP again pledged itself to "support for the government against imperialist intrigues and pressures, and

⁸ Many communist prisoners were executed after the Ba'thi takeover.

⁹ This was solemnly stated by a Mosulite merchant to the author.

struggle against its anti-democratic measures¹⁰." In the last resort Qassem would still be able to count on organized communism as an ally against the nationalists, who remained the common, implacable enemy. How effective that ally could be after so much blood-letting was clearly a different question.

The ICP fully supported the Iraqi government over such current issues as the oil negotiations and Kuwait (see below); both subjects clearly fell within the category of "imperialist intrigues and pressures." The communist attitude towards the Kurdish insurrection was more complex (see below, pp. 346-7).

After Qassem's overthrow 'Azīz al-Hājī, a leading member of the ICP central committee, then in exile, provided an explanation of the party's failure to fight the "dictator":

"... the ICP fought against dictatorship ... True, our party did not call for the armed overthrow of the Qassem government, but this was due to the fact, firstly, that Qassem, because of ... the contradictions with imperialism, pursued, even if not always consistently, a national anti-imperialist policy. This found expression in the measures taken against the oil companies, and also in the policy of cooperation with the socialist countries and support for world peace. Secondly, the political situation both at home and abroad was characterized by feverish reactionary activities. The imperialists, the supporters of the overthrown monarchy, the Ba'this and pro-Nasser elements were all for getting rid of Qassem and sacrificing the country's national independence, this despite contradictions in aims and interests among these forces. In such circumstances the launching of an armed movement would have played into the hands of the enemies of our independence. This is what actually happened. Those who benefited from the war against the Kurds were the imperialists and their supporters who staged the February 9 coup. The opportunities for peaceful mass action had not been exhausted by a long way. Had there been national unity among the patriotic and democratic forces, the situation would have changed quickly in favour of democracy¹¹."

* * *

¹⁰ From the resolution of an ICP central committee meeting, cited in *WMR*, March 1962, p. 55-6. An apparently authoritative essay on the ICP's attitude to the regime had been published under the pseudonym "Muhammad Salim" in *WMR*, Oct. 1961, pp. 35-41.

¹¹ *WMR*, Nov. 1963, pp. 36-43.

After the elimination of its licensed organs the ICP developed a clandestine press with a fair output of mimeographed or even printed material. The broadsheets generally carried the signature of the Iraqi Communist Party; occasionally the names of fictitious front organizations were used, such as the "Progressive Students" or the "*Ṣawt al-Qā'ida* Organization" (after the title of the ICP organ before 1956). From November 1961 the ICP issued a "central newspaper" *Tariq al-Sha'b* ("The Road of the People"), about once in two or three months.

Outside Iraq occasional bursts of recrimination against the regime for its persecution of "patriots" from communist organs were promptly countered by anti-Soviet volleys from the Baghdad press.

During 1961 the leftist non-party press was also all but obliterated on orders from 'Abdī. Only *Ṣawt al-Ahrār* and *al-Bilād* were left to represent the leftist cause, with much circumspection.

* * *

The removal of fellow-travellers from high office continued, although it was never methodically completed. 'Abd al-Fattāḥ Ibrāhīm, the would-be founder of the Republican Party, was dismissed from his post as chairman of the Board of Oil Affairs in March 1961 during a reorganization of the ministry.

In January 1961 Brig. Ḥasan 'Abbūd, commander of Mosul District, was relieved of his post. He had been the last pro-communist senior officer in active command, except for Brig. Awqāṭī, Commander of the Air Force, who did not bestir himself to political action.

* * *

The communists also lost what leading positions they still held in the "national organizations" and professional associations, save for inconsiderable remnants.

Since the spring of 1960 individual trade unions had been wrested from communist control and passed into the hands of "independent" committees over the protests of the incumbents and the leftist press, and demonstrably with the energetic help of the authorities (see above, p. 281 et seq.). By the beginning of 1961 a further stage in the process was reached, and both sides—the ICP and the government—became convinced that the Independents had grown strong enough to attempt to oust the communists from the committees of the General Federation. This consideration was no doubt the cause of the tussle which developed between 'Abdī, who

wished to convene the general congress in February, and the executive, which argued that it was not due until 1962. 'Abdī gave way for the time being, but when the chief union leaders were put under arrest in early May (see above) the opportunity became too good to miss. The second congress of the GFTU was convened at Baghdad on May 15, 1961. In his opening address Qassem stressed, somewhat pointedly, that the delegates were at liberty to elect whomsoever they wished. Subsequently the congress directed a storm of criticism against the outgoing executive for its "subservience to a certain political group." The Independent list succeeded in furnishing all the thirty-five members of the new executive. Ḥājī Ibrāhīm Jawād, chairman of the Oil Workers Union, was elected chairman of the General Federation¹². Once the ICP had lost its hold over the GFTU it generally ceased to contest elections to the committees of the constituent unions.

The federation did not formally withdraw from the World Federation of Trade Unions, but all cooperation was declared to have ceased. The executive did indeed consider adherence to the anti-communist International Confederation of Free Trade Unions. But the government opposed this step; Qassem would hardly have wished to irritate the Soviet Union over such a trifle, or compromise his expressed policy of non-alignment. There were contacts with the West, however; in 1962 Ḥājī Ibrāhīm Jāwad, in his capacity as chairman of the Oil Workers Union, visited the United States as guest of the International Federation of Petroleum Workers. Shortly after the communists had been ousted the new executive took steps to join the UAR-led International Confederation of Arab Trade Unions, but nothing was settled. After the break-up of the UAR in September 1961 the Iraqi federation put out feelers for the establishment of a rival confederation, to include the Iraqi, Syrian and Lebanese federations. Again nothing emerged. The attempt may well have occasioned the harsh treatment meted out to Jawād and his colleagues after Qassem's downfall.

* * *

The professional societies provide a truer impression of the state of politically conscious opinion in Iraq than the trade unions. Their members did not merely have higher intellectual training, but were also less susceptible to official influence. The societies registered communist retreats and defeats, but not a total rout.

The Teachers Union held its third annual elections on February 10,

¹² *INA*, May 15, 1961.

1961¹³. The two main contenders were unchanged—the leftist United Professional List and the anti-communist United Educational Front; but this time the verdict of 1960 was reversed, although the leftist list still received about 7,800 out of some 21,000 votes. Ten provinces fell to the anti-communists. The leftists were victorious in the two Kurdish provinces of Sulaimaniya and Erbil, and in Basra and Amara in the deep south; in Erbil they emerged with an overwhelming majority, while in the south they attained only a slender margin. In Sulaimaniya the leftist list was opposed by an Independent list “known to represent the supporters of the KDP,” over which it won with 524 against 446 votes; the United Educational Front again did not join the match in these uncongenial surroundings. The defeat of the KDP list demonstrates the strength of communism among the Kurdish intelligentsia even in the stronghold of Kurdish nationalism, although it would be exaggerated to draw definite conclusions from this single instance. A further example of NDP weakness was provided by the Diwaniya results, where a “National Democratic list” received 89 votes against the 894 of the anti-communist and 448 of the leftist lists¹⁴. The surprising strength in Ramadi of a list representing the Islamic Party has been referred to above (pp. 301–2).

At the ensuing congress of the Teachers Union the leftist committees were duly dismissed, and UEF candidates elected. The Minister of Education showed his gratification with a gift of ID 24,000 to the union¹⁵.

During the following year the tide continued to recede for the Left. At the elections to the fourth teachers' congress on February 2, 1962, its vote shrank to about 5,700, and the anti-communists climbed to about 13,400¹⁶. Basra Province was gained by the UEF with a huge margin—1,106 votes against 224. At Erbil and Amara the distribution remained virtually unchanged.

In both 1961 and 1962 the sponsors of the Professional list officially complained of illicit practices during the elections¹⁷. The complaints were certainly well founded¹⁸. They cannot, however, detract substantially from the value of the results as a gauge of political opinion in the different regions.

¹³ *Ahālī*, Feb. 12, 22, 26, 1961; *INA*, Feb. 19, 20, 1961.

¹⁴ *Ahālī*, Feb. 12, 1961.

¹⁵ *IT*, March 27, 1961.

¹⁶ *Zamān*, Feb. 3, 1962; *Bilād*, Feb. 6, 1962.

¹⁷ The respective memoranda were published in *Bilād*, Feb. 12, 1961, and in *Ṣawt al-Ahrār*, Feb. 4, 1962.

¹⁸ In Basra “the police prevented teachers known as communists from entering the polling station” (private information from an eyewitness).

During 1961 the other professional associations still under communist control ejected their elected leadership: in January the Medical Association and the Engineers Union; in December the Writers League. In June came the turn of the most important, the Journalists Association.

Immediately after its establishment the leftist executive of the Journalists Association had encountered difficulties with the authorities, although the leftist press was then still flourishing. Within a few weeks of his first election in September 1959, Jawāhirī resigned the chairmanship, "because of the difficulties involved in carrying out the [association's] obligations." The executive fully supported their chairman's complaints, and he was persuaded to withdraw his resignation¹⁹. In April 1960 the second congress of the Journalists Association confirmed the incumbent executive; the communist and the leftist press, though much subdued, were still practically unimpaired in numbers. By the end of 1960, the ICP-controlled journals had been closed down, and early in 1961 joint action by 'Abdi and the anti-communist press resulted in the disqualification of about one hundred members as not being "pure professionals." At the elections held at the third congress of the association, on June 9, 103 out of 149 enfranchised members voted. An anti-communist executive was returned, although the margin was not overwhelmingly great. Ṭaha al-Fayyāḍ, the rabidly anti-communist publisher of *al-Fajr al-Jadīd*, was elected chairman with 50 votes against 41 for Ḥasan al-Asadī, of *al-Jumhūr*, once leftist but by now committed to no line except adulation of the Faithful Leader. Tawfīq al-Sam'ānī, publisher of the independent and respected *al-Zamān*, was elected vice-chairman with 50 votes, against 39 cast for Sāmi al-Buṭṭī of *al-Bilād*, a prominent figure of the Left. Jawāhirī, the outgoing chairman, did not stand again²⁰. He had been under detention since March of that year. Even had he been free, support of this voluble near-communist had become impossible in a situation where cautious sympathizers were the best that the ICP could look for in so conspicuous a post.

April 7, 1962, saw the last elections to the Journalists Association executive under Qassem²¹. Ṭaha al-Fayyāḍ was re-elected chairman with 86 votes, against 63 cast for Luṭfī Bakr Ṣidqī of *Ṣawt al-Aḥrār*. That the nationalists had increased their lead over the Left by a slight percentage only may be regarded, in the prevailing circumstances, as evidence of the latter's resilience.

Nor were the communists and their supporters a negligible quantity in

¹⁹ *IR*, Oct. 1, 1959.

²⁰ *IT*, June 6, 9, 11, 1961.

²¹ *IT*, April 8, 1962.

other returns during this period. Thus their list received 339 votes at the January 1961 elections for the Medical Association executive committee, against the 900 cast for their opponent²². At the elections of the Economists Association in December 1961 they did even better, with 335 votes, against 486 for the anti-communist incumbent²³. In January 1962, at the elections for the Engineers Union, the communist 'Abd al-Razzāq Muṭar managed to collect 557 votes, against 637 for the anti-communist incumbent²⁴. However, since none of the committees was composed on proportional lines, the communist vote was wasted.

The Bar Association, which had been first to go over to the anti-communists, was the last organization to publish the results of elections during Qassem's regime. On October 19, 1962, 'Abd al-Razzāq Shabīb, its pro-Nasser president, was re-elected for the fourth year, with 427 votes, against the 108 for Tawfīq Munīr, the communist vice-chairman of the Peace Partisans²⁵.

* * *

The one nation-wide semi-political organization which was to remain communist-led until the end was the Students Federation. No elections were held after its first conference of 1959 on which the communists had so thoroughly impressed their stamp. The authorities at first objected to the holding of further elections because they expected another communist victory. Later, they withheld consent in order to prevent internecine warfare among the nation's student population. For in 1961 the grip of the elected leadership began to slip. Early in the year constituent unions began to secede from the federation, among them those of Ramadi province, as ever in the nationalist vanguard. In December 1961 a founding congress was held at the Medical College in Baghdad of a "National Federation of Iraqi Students" (*al-ittihād al-waṭanī li-ṭalabat al-'irāq*), which had secretly been in existence since the beginning of that year. At the congress, establishment of the second federation was openly justified by the need to fight the communists²⁶. The new organization, whose nationalist propensities were obvious, was immediately suppressed. It continued to exist

²² *Al-Fajr al-Jadid*, Jan. 23, 1961.

²³ *INA*, Dec. 2, 1961.

²⁴ *IT*, Jan. 21, 1962.

²⁵ *Hayāt*, Oct. 20, 1962.

²⁶ *Ṣawt al-Ahrār*, Dec. 7, 1961; *Mabda'*, Dec. 9, 1961; *Bayān*, Dec. 12, 1961; *Jamāhīr*, June 24, 1963.

underground and, under the leadership of its chairman Miqdād al-ʿĀnī, gained a growing hold over the student body. After the downfall of the regime it became the official representation of Iraqi students.

The Communist Front Organizations vanished for all practical purposes. The Federation of Democratic Youth was officially dissolved in April 1961 "for having deviated from its legitimate aim of truly serving youth" and for having received financial aid "from a certain political party." An appeal to the Court of Cassation was rejected²⁷.

The Women's League was not officially dissolved until the advent of the Ba'thi regime in 1963. But it was continually harassed throughout 1961, and most of its provincial branches were closed down. No congress convened. At the beginning of 1962 the league could still importune the authorities for a license to hold its congress; it received no reply²⁸. Thereafter it was completely inactive. The authorities promoted a number of rival organizations, which were certainly anti-communist but did not play a political role otherwise.

The Peace Partisans arrived at an ambivalent position in their relationship with the regime. The movement was subjected to persecutions similar to those undergone by the Women's League and other communist-led bodies. Prominent "partisans" were periodically held under detention. In May 1961 'Abdī ordered the closing of the Peace Partisans' branches throughout Iraq on the ground that all Iraqis were peace partisans—a point which Qassem had made before²⁹. However, the organization was not expressly disbanded. Occasionally activities were licensed for a "Ban the Bomb" meeting or other innocuous purposes. The annual congress of 1961 took place, but not that of 1962³⁰. Statements that accorded with government policies, on Kuwait or the Belgrade Conference of September 1961, were freely published. Above all the chairman of the Iraqi organization, 'Azīz Sharīf, continued to enjoy Qassem's personal favour. He was still received in audience and travelled abroad to represent his movement on international occasions. Why this front organization continued to receive special treatment can only be conjectured. It is clear that the decision was Qassem's in person. He may have wanted to maintain one live line with the ICP, or seen the movement as a safety-valve for communist frustrations. He may also have been moved by a liking for 'Azīz Sharīf, whose professions of loyalty and admiration were constant and unbounded, quite

²⁷ *Al-'Ahd al-Jadīd*, April 27, June 29, 1961; *Zamān*, May 9, 1961.

²⁸ *Bilād*, Feb. 15, 21, March 14, April 16, 1962.

²⁹ *Zamān*, May 9, 1961.

³⁰ *Bilād*, Dec. 12, 1961.

in contrast to the attitude demonstrated by the generality of communist leaders. Probably the last motive was decisive.

* * *

Ṣā'igh's Iraqi Communist Party led its shadow life until Qassem's downfall.

The Party held its first Congress on November 9–11, 1960, after a delay of six months (see above, p. 277). The second congress convened on December 2, 1961, and the third on January 3, 1963. Each time Ṣā'igh was re-elected chairman of the party, at the head of committees composed of persons who were otherwise completely unknown in Iraqi political life. The programmatic speeches of the chairman were lengthy. Their contents, however, mainly boiled down to cheering "our Communist Party" and the Faithful Leader. He struck an occasional note of realism when he complained of "the obstinacy of the reluctant comrades" who still refused to join the legal ICP.

Ṣā'igh's party was said to have eight branches in the country; they seem to have been entirely inactive. In November 1960 *al-Mabda'* closed down because of a "desperate lack of funds"³¹. It reappeared in February 1961, officially as a weekly, although in practice it was issued much less frequently. A modicum of collaboration, indirect at least, with the ICP took the form of occasional letters in *al-Mabda'* from ICP members who complained of the persecutions to which they were exposed, and reports of anti-union machinations or similar troubles³².

When the National Progressive Party was to cease activities, in the summer of 1962, its final announcement stated that it had been left alone in the field³³. The disregard of Ṣā'igh's party shows to what extent it lay outside public awareness.

* * *

Until the end, the National Democratic Party provided critics of the regime who would not be silenced. As an organization, however, its lack of vitality, in conjunction with recurring internal crises, soon put an end to its effective existence.

The party's seventh congress convened on November 23, 1960. It lis-

³¹ *Mabda'*, Feb. 4, 1961.

³² See, e.g., *Mabda'*, Oct. 14, 1960; Aug. 7, 1961; Dec. 9, 1961.

³³ *Bayān*, July 2, 1962.

tened to a lengthy address from Chaderchi. This mainly dealt with the speaker's initial mistrust of the revolutionary regime and his vindication by events. The committee elections which followed returned the party leadership exactly as it had crystallized after the secession of Ḥadid and his supporters³⁴.

If its members had hoped that the NDP would emerge from the seventh congress united and rejuvenated they were soon disappointed. Chaderchi, the pride and mainstay of the party, was also its bane, with his uncompromising belief in his own political infallibility, his quickness to take offence, and as a result, his inability to preside over the routine of a working team. The NDP had split over the question as to whether Qassem was still worthy of confidence. It was a problem of the first order, and Chaderchi, chief of the noes, had found on his side a fair portion of the party's best brains. But he also believed in the cooperation of all constitutionalists with the communists. This was not merely an impracticable position to hold in the situation in 1961; after the expulsion of the left wing from the NDP in 1959 it was an issue on which Chaderchi was bound to find himself virtually alone, with his principal lieutenants arrayed against him at the head of a determined majority. But it was not in Chaderchi's character to heed tactical considerations when basic principles of policy were at stake. Wrangling behind the scenes about the desirability of re-establishing a National Front preceded another offer of resignation by Chaderchi, which was rejected on March 7, 1961³⁵. Then the crisis of the previous year repeated itself. At an extraordinary meeting of the executive committee on April 15, Ḥmūd, Jamīl, Muẓhir al-Azzāwī and 'Alī 'Awād al-Najm resigned—the vice-chairman, secretary-general, deputy secretary-general and treasurer of the party. Chaderchi also resubmitted his resignation, but was persuaded to stay³⁶.

The difficulty was complicated by the fact that 'Azzāwī was the editor of *al-Aḥālī*. Since by law no newspaper could appear unless its editor had a licence from the Ministry of Guidance, 'Azzāwī's resignation meant that the NDP was again without an official organ. The authorities were predictably unhelpful over the appointment of his successor. *Al-Aḥālī* remained in abeyance until a new editor had been approved; it reappeared on August 20, after a four-month interval. An attempt to circumvent official chicanery by publishing the Amara newspaper *Ṣawt al-Aḥālī* in Baghdad had been thwarted by the prompt detention of its editor.

³⁴ *Aḥālī*, Nov. 24, 1960.

³⁵ *IT*, March 9, 1961.

³⁶ *Mid. Mir.*, April 22, 1961; *IT*, May 18, 1961.

An extraordinary congress convened on May 19 to elect a new executive³⁷. It was definitely an assembly of lesser men, none of whom was known on a nation-wide scale. The congress should have been attended by the delegates at its predecessor of November 1960; of the 779 previous delegates, only 197 appeared. The Iraqi press did not fail to interpret the decrease as an indication of the party's decay. The morale of the congress must have been further lowered by the absence of Chaderchi himself, who was abroad for health reasons.

The new executive published a statement on the main point of controversy. It stressed the general desirability of a "National Front including *all* the political sections of the country," but it denied that the party had conducted secret negotiations towards this end³⁸. The statement obviously came from Chaderchi.

On September 22 Chaderchi returned from Europe and immediately tendered his resignation as chairman of the NDP to the central committee³⁹.

He had reached the "definite conclusion," Chaderchi asserted, that the conditions existing in Iraq did not allow him to fulfil his duties to the party, and he therefore resigned his chairmanship as well as his party membership. The crises through which the party had passed were due to the general feeling that it had not been permitted to act in an atmosphere of freedom and independence. The revolution had been followed by military rule which might have been justified for a brief transitional period. The joy which had greeted the renewal of party life early in 1960 stemmed from the assumption that this period was near its end. "However," he noted, "... most regrettably the responsible authorities have given no serious proof of preparation for democracy... On the contrary, they have increased their interference in general affairs, they have buttressed the military emergency regulations, they have stepped up the suppression of freedom and the persecution of individuals for their party allegiance, their principles and their beliefs⁴⁰. There can, therefore, be no longer any doubt that these military authorities do not desire anything except their own rule." Chaderchi went on to state that the NDP did not believe in an underground

³⁷ *IT*, May 21, 1961.

³⁸ See, e.g., *Zamān*, July 30, 1961.

³⁹ The resignation was announced in *Ahālī*, Oct. 1, 1961, together with the comment that it was being considered by the NDP central committee.

⁴⁰ An episode that aroused much attention was the dismissal of NDP members by the Railways and Ports authorities during the last days of 1960. The employers claimed that the dismissed had been crypto-communists, which the NDP indignantly denied.

existence, and events had proved that overt political organizations could not work in the shadow of military government.

The reaction of the central committee came up to Chaderchi's evident expectations. The committee resolved unanimously to confirm all that its chairman had expressed in his letters "after extensive and independent deliberations, including consultations with the branches." However, it apologized for being unable to accept his resignation. Instead, the suspension of all NDP party activities throughout Iraq was announced "in protest against the lasting conditions governing the country," until "a healthy democratic atmosphere necessary for party work" prevailed.

The text of Chaderchi's notification, together with the subsequent resolution of the committee, was published three weeks later in *al-Ahālī*, in extra-size type⁴¹. The statements contained few arguments that Chaderchi and his followers had not ventilated before, or were not to put forward again, but Chaderchi's gesture was an abdication in more senses than one. It was clear that the leader of the party, and the party with him, renounced all action because the regime was not worthy of active party existence.

In the same issue *al-Ahālī* announced its disappearance.

Chaderchi had shattered the organizational framework of his party, but he did not mean to retire from politics. He devoted himself instead to the more congenial role of free-lance critic and publicist. Until its downfall, Chaderchi continued to polemicize against the military regime, the absence of constitutional progress, the repression exercised by the government in Kurdistan, and the mistakes of his renegade friends. He was obsessed by the past and did not tire of expounding and defending his own conduct on all conceivable occasions. The chief vehicle of his remonstrations became the daily *al-Muwāḥḥidīn*, which first appeared eight months later, on June 3, 1962. Chaderchi and his mouthpiece apparently were not molested. It is said that Qassem tried to wean Chaderchi from his hostility by promises of office and constitutional progress, in personal talks. If this is true, he was not successful, and indeed a bad psychologist.

* * *

At a time it looked as if the split of April 1961 would result in the birth of another daughter party for the NDP. In September of that year Ḥusayn Jamīl and his political friends were said to be contemplating the formation of a "Congress (*mu'tamar*) Party" for which Muḥḥir al-'Azzāwī was to

⁴¹ *Ahālī*, Oct. 13, 1961, the last issue of the newspaper.

publish the party organ. Jamīl's politics meant that the party would have been constitutionalist and antagonistic to Qassem; anti-communist; it would genuinely have favoured an all-Arab rapprochement, provided that the essential independence of Iraq was safe-guarded. However, the necessary notifications for a licence were never made, and Jamīl denied having any intention of doing so⁴². He was wise, no doubt; it is inconceivable that in the prevailing situation another moderate party could have taken root.

From then on Jamīl established contact with the nationalist officers' group preparing for Qassem's overthrow, although he never became an active conspirator. His part must have been similar to that he himself and a few of his friends had played before the 14th July revolution. He was a sympathizer and ready to advise on general points, without having access to operational matters.

* * *

The record of the National Progressive Party during the regime was hardly eventful. Its first congress convened on October 27, 1960, representing 2,763 registered members. The assembly unanimously accepted the list of candidates for party office presented, headed by Muḥammad Ḥadīd⁴³. The second congress was held on December 27-28, 1961, and elected virtually the same central committee⁴⁴. None of the prominent party members had any part in government. Ḥadīd served as adviser to the team which negotiated with the Iraq Petroleum Company in 1961; Zigam retained the now almost empty function of chairman of the General Federation of Peasants Societies.

It was thus the result of circumstances rather than of principle that in its relationship with the regime the NPP soon slid into that same condition of "negativity," the prevention of which had induced its founders to break with the parent party. But it was difficult for men of intellect, ambition, and experience, who were shut off from practically all outlets for their energy as politically minded citizens, to maintain a friendly attitude towards Qassem past his prime, whatever fundamental goodwill they may have

⁴² *IT*, Sept. 18, 1961; *Ḥayāt*, Sept. 19, 1961; *Mid Mir.*, Sept. 23, 1961. "Congress Party" had been the name proposed for an alignment in 1956 between the *Istiqlāl* and the NDP; Sa'īd Qazzāz, Nuri's Minister of the Interior, rejected the application.

⁴³ *Bilād*, Oct. 28, 1960.

⁴⁴ *Zamān*, *IT*, Dec. 28, 29, 30, 1961.

harboured. What was left to them was the critic's task, to be prosecuted at the party congress or, more usually, through the columns of *al-Bayān*. It is not surprising in view of their common roots that, like the NDP, the NPP found its chief complaint in the lack of constitutional progress. NPP criticism of shortcomings and abuses tended to be better defined than that of its rival, deeper in its analysis and coupled with constructive suggestions. It lacked the weary and ill-humoured scepticism which characterized *al-Ahālī* and then *al-Muwāṭin*. A point was made of praising what seemed worthy of praise. So far, the NPP remained true to its rejection of negativity: but its disappointment at the continuation of military rule remained sharp⁴⁵.

At last even Ḥadīd's patience gave way—suddenly and without any known occasion. On July 2, 1962, after a last fulminating demand for a Permanent Constitution “now” had wrung another promise from Qassem that this would come about “in 1963,” *al-Bayān* announced the party's stay of activities⁴⁶. The formulation of the statement left nothing to be desired in clarity: “The party has taken this decision because it has no major role to play in the present general situation . . . in which there is no place for a political system.” That the despair of the NPP was final was made clear by an aside that the prevailing situation was rooted in “the nature of the present rule.”

Chaderchi had been unfriendly to Qassem from the start, and his retirement from political activity in October 1961 could be shrugged off as being inspired at least in part by spite. That Ḥadīd should have been converted to the same convictions was a heavy blow to what remained of Qassem's public credit. The press duly reacted with rebukes for Ḥadīd, ranging from regrets for his faintness of heart to insinuations that he had been swayed by pecuniary interests⁴⁷. Only *al-Muwāṭin* expressed a thinly veiled satisfaction⁴⁸.

* * *

The Islamic Party was extinguished early in 1961, although its death was as gentle as Qassem could make it. On March 15 he ordered into his presence the leaders of the party who had been imprisoned for the last

⁴⁵ See also an interview with Ḥadīd in *Ḥayāt*, March 14, 1962.

⁴⁶ *Mid. Mir.*, June 16, 1962; *Bayān—IT*, July 2, 1962; *Bayān*, July 2, 1962.

⁴⁷ It was suggested that Ḥadīd had acted in revenge for the control of soap prices (*Sharq*, July 3, 1962).

⁴⁸ *Muwāṭin*, July 3, 1962.

five months (see above, p. 302), and after talking with them for several hours, sent them home. A week later the Military Governor General ordered the dissolution of the party and forbade all activity in its name. At the same time the leaders were advised that they might apply for a licence to found a "society" for the pursuit of their aims⁴⁹. Nothing further was heard of the Islamic Party or of any society in its place.

During the weeks that preceded Qassem's step petitions for the release of the party leaders and the lifting of the virtual ban on the party had been widely publicized by party members, '*ulamā*' and sympathetic newspapers. It is probable that popular support for this agitation decided Qassem at one and the same time to accede to the first part of the request, and to refuse the second.

* * *

Qassem's relations with religious circles otherwise remained uneventful on the surface, but charged with hidden tension. The reticence of Muḥsin al-Ḥakīm at an interview given in the beginning of 1961 was significant. The Shi'i divine, whose description by his Lebanese interviewer as "the strongest popular personality in Iraq" was probably warranted, had no word to say on the situation inside Iraq or his attitude towards the regime, except that the Personal Status Law of 1959 (see above, pp. 246-7) was obnoxious to Muslims and should be repealed⁵⁰.

It remained true that Qassem never consciously harboured ill intentions towards Islamic interests. He stressed that the Permanent Constitution would restate that Islam was the official religion of the republic⁵¹. The legal and financial affairs of *awqāf* were well cared for. It was revealing of Qassem's turn of mind that religious libraries received liberal grants, and that the Baghdad Sharī'a College was attached to the university, with a separate class for women. It is too much to expect that these overtures, which were after all those of a well-meaning outsider, should have purchased genuine acknowledgment for Qassem.

* * *

No "nationalist" party had submitted its application to the Minister of the Interior under the Associations Law. The nationalists were at their

⁴⁹ *Zamān*, March 16, 1961; *Aḥālī*, March 23, 1961; *Falaṣṭīn*, March 23, 1961.

⁵⁰ *Ḥayāt*, Jan. 19, 1961.

⁵¹ *IT*, July 19, 1961.

nadir after their failure to accomplish Qassem's assassination, and the depletion of their active elite was even greater than after the Shawwāf revolt. Those who had not been arrested had fled or been stunned into immobility.

The split within the Ba'th Party throughout the Middle East over the acceptance of Abdel Nasser's leadership of Arab nationalism went back to 1959. In 1961 it widened into an open break. The "National [i.e. General] Command" in Beirut asserted its independence while a rival "Revolutionary Command" in Cairo, with Rikābī and the Jordanian 'Abdallah al-Rimāwī as members, declared for Abdel Nasser. In Iraq the struggle had been decided in practice with the dissolution of the regional command in November 1959, at the time of Rikābī's flight to Syria (see above, p. 257). In February 1960 a new, "temporary," command was reconstituted in Baghdad, which excluded Rikābī and his friends. Its regional secretary was first Tālib Ḥusayn al-Shabīb. In 1961, after his release from two years of detention in Qassem's prisons, 'Alī Ṣāliḥ al-Sa'dī, an even more radical opponent of Egypt's claims to hegemony, assumed this post. Shabīb and Sa'dī and their close collaborators were the civilian members of the team which ruled Iraq for nine months in 1963.

The record of the Iraqi Ba'th from 1961 until Qassem's downfall belongs to the chapter relating the antecedents of the Ba'thi coup rather than to an account of the current political situation.

A diversion was furnished by a shadowy "Arab Struggle Party" (*ḥizb al-kifāh al-'arabī*) which distributed leaflets in the early summer of 1960 calling for revolt against the anti-Arab dictator. Shortly afterwards some thirty arrests were made. Qassem then announced in person that he had instructed the courts to publish the sentences on "this clique of spies . . . who succeeded in seducing a few of the simple-minded under the guise of Arabism, nationalism and religion⁵²." Later those arrested were either quietly released or detained without trial. The "party," which had thus gained a brief spell of publicity through Qassem's mention of its activities, must be regarded as a secret society of little consequence.

* * *

The first half of 1960 saw the gradual reappearance of nationalist newspapers. Qassem evidently wished to provide a counterweight to the growing restiveness of the communist press. *Baghdād*, *al-Ḥurriyya*, *al-Ḥiyād*, *al-Fajr al-Jadīd* and the weekly *al-Sharq* returned to the public arena in this

⁵² *Bilād*, July 30, 1960.

order, and continued their campaign against the red danger within. They enthusiastically welcomed signs of a *détente* with the UAR (see below). Qassem's person was respected and his policies were interpreted in a favourable light, as far as possible.

All the same, this Indian summer was brief. After the beginning of August, *al-Hiyād*, *Baghdād* and *al-Hurriyya* were again closed on 'Abdī's order. It was at this time that the communist press was finally reduced, and Qassem's motive for silencing the nationalist newspapers was again probably the wish to preserve a balance. Even the voice of *Al-Thawra*, vehement communist-baiter and a zealous supporter of Qassem, was not heard for some time. Its publisher Tā'ī had been arrested in September 1960 for an unbridled attack on 'Awnī Yūsuf, the supposedly leftist Minister of Works and Housing, and the newspaper "suspended itself" till after Yūsuf's dismissal two months later.

* * *

The last daily newspaper which stood for nationalist principles in a more positive sense than mere anti-communism, *al-Fajr al-Jadīd*, was suspended on October 26, 1961, and did not reappear until after Qassem's downfall⁵³. The explanation proffered by 'Abdī was that the paper had been "fanning sedition and rancour between the sisters, Syria and Egypt." The reality behind this tender regard for the relations of Syria with her former masters was that since the coup at Damascus *al-Fajr al-Jadīd* had been fiercely attacking the breakaway of Syria as a betrayal of Arabdom. Qassem, not eager to appear as an accomplice of the Syrian separatists, showed much forbearance. But when *al-Fajr al-Jadīd* insulted Shukrī al-Quwatli, doyen of Syrian statesmen, for the welcome he had given to the new regime, the cup overflowed.

Qassem showed a remarkable clemency towards his nationalist enemies. By the end of 1961 all the prisoners sentenced by Maḥdāwī's court had been released, often after a meeting with Qassem. The politicians and officers convicted for committing offences under the monarchy, Rashīd 'Ālī and his two accomplices, the Shawwāf mutineers, even the Ba'thi plotters against Qassem's life, were restored to freedom, and often regained their property and pension rights. The most spectacular pardon was that of

⁵³ *IT*, Oct. 27; *Mid. Mir.*, Oct. 28, 1961. In December 1962 a daily called *al-Jumhūriyya* started to appear in Baghdad. It had no connection with the Ba'th organ of 1958. This second *al-Jumhūriyya* disappeared with the 14th Ramaḍān coup.

Aref. On November 25, 1961, he was brought from prison to Qassem, who embraced and entertained him, escorted him home and reinstated him in the army, although not in active service. Aref put on record his gratitude and brotherly love in a newspaper interview he gave the following day⁵⁴.

Offers of pardon were also extended to the exiles. Since they were free to decide for themselves, and most were spectacularly engaged in campaigns to vilify Qassem, few availed themselves of the opportunity. Among those who accepted were Brig. Nāji Tālib and Col. Miḥat Sirrī. Neither was a conspirator by vocation, unlike so many of their comrades in the Iraqi army.

Qassem had proved before that he did not pursue a quarrel for quarrel's sake. In addition, there were certainly good rational grounds from 1960 onwards for remission. The country craved normalcy. The old regime was beyond resurrection, certainly beyond resurrection by force. Army opinion in general had never condemned the nationalist plotters among service members, as Qassem must have known; they may have been widely regarded as unwise, impetuous and bungling, but they had not transgressed the fundamental traditions and beliefs of the officers corps, as had the communists during their brief period of power. Lastly, Qassem may understandably have believed that, on their record so far, his security organizations were more efficient than they actually were.

An irrational element remains, however. There is abundant evidence, including direct statements by Qassem, to show that Qassem fully believed that any opposition to his regime was intrinsically wicked as well as unpatriotic. Fundamentally humane himself, he could not bring himself to believe that those officers and politicians, many of whom he had personally known well for many years, were wicked and unpatriotic and ought, therefore, to be destroyed. They were misguided or foolish, but having been taught their lesson they would see the light and gratefully accept the mercy of their leader, extended to them as soon as the general situation permitted.

⁵⁴ *Akhbār*, Nov. 26, 1961; *Taqaddum*, Nov. 27, 1961.

CHAPTER 27 THE KURDISH WAR

Sixteen months passed from the fifth congress of the Kurdistan Democratic Party in May 1960 until the acknowledged outbreak of the insurrection. The interval provides a record of deteriorating relations and mounting exasperation on the side of both the government and the KDP, without sight of a guiding hand on either. Two facts stand out: the reluctance of the principals to step over the brink, and the growing antagonism between Mullā Muṣṭafā Barzani and the KDP, although he and the party were at one in their despair of Qassem.

The KDP organ *Kha-bat* began to show growing disillusionment over the government's attitude towards the Kurdish question shortly after the party congress. The criticism was put forward in guarded, would-be constructive terms, but it went to the roots, and extended to all spheres of national life: workers had been dismissed from government service because of their KDP membership; the Directorate-General of Kurdish Studies was not functioning; the officially sponsored slogans for the 14th July celebrations had ignored Kurdish nationhood, although *Kha-bat* hoped that the omission was not deliberate; Kurdistan did not receive its share in development projects; the authorities neglected the Kurdish peasants' needs. As the year drew on, Kurdish complaints became more sweeping, and the government more hostile. In November 1960 Ibrāhīm Aḥmad, as publisher of *Kha-bat*, was put on trial "for stirring up national dissensions and instigating fanaticism¹." The court acquitted him, but his arraignment was a new departure in the Kurdish experience under Qassem. At the same time the Kurdish weekly *Deh Nagi Kurd* was suspended for ten months, and its editor fined, for an attack on the "Kurd-hating" authorities of Kirkuk². Both events signalled that in the future 'Abdī would treat the Kurdish press, hitherto allowed a long leash, no more leniently than the Arabic press.

In January 1961 renewed pressure for the promotion of Kurdish culture,

¹ *IT*, Nov. 17, 1960.

² *Al-Fajr al-Jadid*, Dec. 15, 1960.

and in particular for the activization of the Directorate-General of Kurdish Studies, led Qassem to cancel the annual Kurdish teachers conference at Shaqlawa in February 1961. On February 20 Qassem, wishing to stress once more the indivisibility of Iraq, explained in a public speech that "Kurdu" had been a title bestowed by the ancient kings of Persia upon valiant warriors, whose descendants later merged in the conquering Muslim army³. Qassem meant to flatter while he warned. To the KDP this implied denial of Kurdish nationhood confirmed its worst suspicions. A comment in *al-Thawra* that Iraq was one nation, and not "a collection of peoples," provoked *Kha-bat* into demanding that the paper be officially reproved. Qassem's failure to do so was bitterly noted⁴.

The exchange heralded a further deterioration of Kurdish relations with the government, and this time a final break became all but certain. On March 9 a warrant was again issued for the arrest of Ibrāhīm Aḥmad, not on a political but on a criminal charge—of having been an accessory to murder⁵. Šādiq Mirān, a chief of the Khoshnaw and a supporter of Qassem, had been murdered near Shaqlawa in February. The murderers were known to be members or sympathizers of the KDP, and Qassem considered that there was a case for holding the secretary of the party privy to the crime. Aḥmad vehemently denied the allegation, and on the following day the warrant was withdrawn. But Aḥmad took the incident as a last warning to himself, and went into hiding forthwith, although he did not leave Baghdad.

A minor curiosity of the perplexing Iraqi scene was that Aḥmad continued to be named as publisher of the party organ while he was no longer available to the authorities. However, this situation did not continue. On March 22 *Kha-bat* appeared legally for the last time; it was closed after printing an address delivered by Jalāl Ṭālabānī on Nowruz, the previous day^{5a}. Ṭālabānī's expressions may not have been more incendiary on this occasion than those voiced by many of his comrades in previous months, but patience was exhausted on both sides. A few days later the Kurdish-language daily *Kurdestan* was also suspended *sine die*. It had been appearing since March 5, with Aḥmad as publisher and Ṭālabānī as editor, "as a stand-by for *Kha-bat*⁶." The calculation did not succeed, and from April 1961 the Kurdish national movement in Iraq was without an authorized publication.

³ *Zamān*, Feb. 22, 1961. ~

⁴ *Thawra*, March 2, 1961; *Kha-bat*, March 6, 7, 1961; *Kha-bat—IT*, March 17, 1961.

⁵ *Ahālī*, Feb. 26, March 14, 1961.

^{5a} Kinnane, D., *The Kurds and Kurdistan*, London, 1964, p. 63.

⁶ *Mid. Mir.*, March 11, 1961; private information.

Until September the KDP lingered in the twilight. The main branches in Baghdad and Sulaimaniya remained open while others in Mosul, Kirkuk and Darbandi-Khan, for instance, were closed by the authorities. Prominent KDP members were detained, set free, and detained again. Others went underground or drifted north. Committee meetings were still held in Baghdad, but in private houses and with some endeavour at secrecy. Contacts with the government had almost ceased since the beginning of 1961. In June the KDP addressed a final appeal to Qassem "on the basis of... the July 1958 Constitution⁷." There was no reply. It seems that Qassem could no longer stand being pestered by stiff-necked people who refused to accept his view of what constituted the unity of the Iraqi homeland and Arab-Kurdish partnership.

* * *

The tribal situation also had deteriorated beyond redemption. On November 5, 1960, Mullā Muṣṭafā left Iraq for the Soviet Union, ostensibly to participate in the October Revolution celebrations. His real purpose was to persuade the Soviet government to press Qassem to make concessions to Kurdish nationalism, and he failed⁸. He returned to Baghdad on January 13, 1961. During his absence fighting had broken out between the Barzani and their neighbours, the Zibar and the Bardost. The Kurdish nationalists contended afterwards that Qassem had deliberately taken the opportunity of setting rival tribes on the leaderless Barzani, and that he had this treachery in mind when he permitted Mullā Muṣṭafā to leave Iraq. The interpretation is needlessly contrived: in all probability Qassem had been certain that Mullā Muṣṭafā would return empty-handed, and hoped he might become discouraged. But the charge shows Qassem's reputation for duplicity, and the bad blood that had been engendered. However that may be, Mullā Muṣṭafā returned embittered and thoroughly disillusioned that any good might still be obtained through Qassem's good will. His fighting spirit was roused by the news from the north. In mid-March he finally left Baghdad for Barzan. Apparently he was permitted to depart without molestation, although he must have expected arrest if he stayed on.

⁷ See Emir Kamuran Bedir Khan's appeal to the United Nations of June 15, 1962, *MEJ*, XVI, no. 3, pp. 373-4.

⁸ This is asserted by Schmidt, Adamson and Kinnane. Indirect evidence of the lack of Soviet support was provided by Qassem in his press conference of September 23, 1961; when he went out of his way to absolve the Soviet Union from all share of responsibility for the Kurdish rising (*JNA*, Sept. 26, 1961).



Slums on the outskirts of Baghdad



Paul Popper

"Thousands of little homes for the poor"—government slum-clearing

Nationalist Politicians



Šiddīq Shanshal, Istiqlāl secretary



Nāji Tālib



Fu'ād al-Rikābī, Ba'th secretary
1958-59



'Alī Šālīḥ al-Sa'dī, Ba'th secretary,
1963

The Successors



Camera Press

Col. Tāhir Yaḥyā al-Takrītī



Camera Press

Col. Aḥmad Ḥasan al-Bakr



The End: From Baghdad Television, February, 9 1963

With Mullā Muṣṭafā's return to his home ground, he became the dominating personality in the Kurdish north. However, he did not manage to maintain harmony within the Kurdish leadership. This applied especially in his relations with the KDP, still centred on Baghdad, whose nominal chairman he remained. He talked freely, with a bitterness amounting to hatred, against the alleged inertia, cowardice, inefficiency and intellectual presumptuousness of the KDP politicians, singling out Ibrāhīm Aḥmad, his particular dislike. Ibrāhīm Aḥmad, on his part, was equally open in his complaints against Mullā Muṣṭafā's selfishness, arbitrariness, unfairness, tribal backwardness and even his dishonesty. But while Mullā Muṣṭafā's anger was untempered by qualifications and second thoughts, Ibrāhīm Aḥmad never ceased to recognize and support the Barzani as the indispensable captain of the struggle. This was not mere lip service. At least as long as Qassem lived, the KDP made no disloyal move against Mullā Muṣṭafā as the national leader and the supreme arbiter on political questions, as well as the military commander-in-chief.

* * *

A detailed description of the fighting that continued in Iraqi Kurdistan from 1961 until Qassem's downfall is outside the scope of this work. Its intricacies have been called by D.A. Schmidt, the *New York Times* reporter who stayed with the insurgents in 1962, "a nightmare of confusion".⁹ The main points, however, are easily distinguished.

The armed conflict continued to widen in scope both geographically and politically. It began in the north-west in spring 1961 as an offensive—retributive as well as preventive—by the Barzani and their tribal allies against the Zibar and their allies. The initial campaign resulted in an overwhelming victory for the Barzani, who occupied wide tracts of "enemy" territory, burned down villages and sent thousands of refugees over the frontier into Turkey.

Of the smaller minorities in the area of strife, the Assyrian villagers made common cause with the Barzani. They were warriors by tradition, and their relations with the Baghdad government had always been bad. When the rising broke out they joined the Kurdish nationalists in their hundreds, and gained the respect of their allies for their courage and devotion. In retaliation they received even more than their share of attention from the Zibar; an atrocity remembered with particular bitterness was the burning of the Assyrian church in Amadiya.

⁹ Schmidt, p. 190.

There are indications that the Turcomans later supported the government and were harassed, when opportunity offered, by the insurgents. But they played no conspicuous part in the war.

* * *

The second stage, from the beginning of September 1961, saw the extension of hostilities east and south-east, beyond Ruwandiz and far towards Sulaimaniya; more important, the Barzani forces now became actively embroiled with the Iraqi army.

It is certain that neither Qassem nor Mullā Muṣṭafā wished for an outbreak of open warfare until the event; it is equally certain that each credited the other with aggressive intentions. Thus Mullā Muṣṭafā and the KDP leadership took it for granted that Qassem moved troops to the north in the summer of 1961 for a large-scale attack on the area under Barzani control. On the other side, Qassem may be excused for believing that assaults committed at that time on police posts and isolated garrisons were made by order of Mullā Muṣṭafā.

Neither of these suspicions appears to have been founded. No army forces were posted to the north during the summer of 1961 to supplement the Second Division, which had garrisoned the four northern provinces for many years, although some dispositions were probably altered within the division to ensure greater mobility. For the other side, there are on record the definite assertions of Mullā Muṣṭafā and Ibrāhīm Aḥmad that they did all in their power to prevent, or at least to defer, a clash with the government forces. However both admitted that they did not succeed in curbing all their supporters at all times¹⁰. At the beginning of September there were serious outbreaks of disorder throughout Kurdistan, from Zakho in the north-west to Darbandi-Khan in the south-east. They included the "occupation" of Zakho, where there was no army garrison at that time, by KDP supporters acting independently. Meanwhile the desertion of Kurdish officers and other ranks had started on a considerable scale.

Even now the government hesitated. However the rapidly deteriorating situation could no longer be concealed from the public, and references to undefined "lawlessness" and "violence" in the north crept into the press.

The final spark was struck by 'Abbās Māmand, chief of the powerful Ako tribe and as a southern neighbour of the Zibar predestined to be an ally of the Barzani. Apparently Māmand's particular grievance was with agrarian reform¹¹. It is a testimony of the persistence of tribal loyalties

¹⁰ Schmidt, Adamson, *passim*.

¹¹ Adamson, p. 97.

among the Kurds that the largely settled Ako were prepared to follow their agha to war on such an issue. On September 12 large tribal forces under Māmānd ambushed an army convoy on its way from Kirkuk—the divisional headquarters—to Sulaimaniya near Bazyan, inflicting scores of casualties¹².

Qassem accepted the incident as a declaration of war. On September 16 the Iraqi air force bombed Barzan village; according to Ibrāhīm Aḥmad this was “Qassem’s great mistake” which determined Mullā Muṣṭafā to fight it out¹³. On that day Baghdad Radio first admitted that an armed revolt had broken out among the Kurds which, it said, had already been put down by the army. The public had been prepared for the news on the preceding day by the broadcasting of messages of support and loyalty from the north.

* * *

The third stage was reached when the KDP entered the armed struggle in force. It had, of course, never been neutral. The central committee was unanimous in holding that Qassem intended to strike, but throughout the summer it was deeply divided on the response the party should make. The majority, led by Ibrāhīm Aḥmad, held that open hostilities should be delayed as long as possible in order to build up strength. The material odds in Qassem’s favour were overwhelming—the party then had at its disposal a few hundred rifles at the most. Moreover, this faction believed that a Kurdish rising was Qassem’s one hope of rallying the army back to his side. In the background there may have lurked the feeling that the KDP was a political instrument and would disintegrate if put under a strain for which it was not created. The minority, with Jalāl Ṭālabānī and ‘Umar Muṣṭafā, was for anticipating Qassem’s attack and believed that he could not count on the army, either politically or operationally. Both sides agreed to send Ṭālabānī to obtain advice of Mullā Muṣṭafā, “since in that situation only he could provide unified leadership and prevent a split.” Mullā Muṣṭafā still counselled restraint, unless Qassem made recourse to open violence against the Barzani, the Ako or the KDP¹⁴.

It is unlikely that the KDP could have maintained an attitude of non-

¹² Qassem in his press conference of Sept. 23, 1965. It was near Bazyan that the Kurdish “kingdom” of Shaykh Maḥmūd Barzenchi met its end at the hands of an Anglo-Indian force in 1919.

¹³ Private information.

¹⁴ Private information.

belligerency once Qassem had decided on force against the Barzani, even had the majority continued to wish it. However, Qassem himself solved the problem for the KDP. On September 23 he announced during a press conference that the KDP was dissolved for contravening the Associations Law, as it had failed to hold its annual conference¹⁵. The obvious reply was that by May 1961, when the sixth congress was due, the KDP assembly could not have gathered without fear of instant arrest; but the time for formal explanations was past. On September 25 the central committee decided that the KDP would join Mullā Muṣṭafā in his armed struggle¹⁶. A fortnight later a Baghdad court declared the KDP dissolved on the ground that it had offended against section 4 of the Associations Law by "having sown discord among the people¹⁷." The charge was more honest and meaningful than Qassem's.

The first onslaught of the Iraqi army hardly changed the tactical position. Some of the larger towns of the north which had been in Kurdish possession for a few days were reoccupied without organized opposition, and remained garrisoned. Attempts to clear and hold the countryside were made without much energy, and soon declined outside the pages of grandiloquent bulletins. Nor did the war efforts of the KDP have much effect for at least two months after the decision of its central committee to join battle, and it took a further three months until the party had developed a genuine fighting body. In the meantime Mullā Muṣṭafā had turned east, and in concert with 'Abbās Māmand had reduced most of the country between the Barzani and the Ako.

By March 1962 the strategic situation had settled into the configuration which it was to retain until Qassem's end. The Kurdish countryside from the Syrian frontier to the edge of Khanaqin oilfield, a crescent 300 miles long and up to 70 miles wide, was in the hands of the Kurdish nationalists. The Iraqi army generally held the towns larger than, or at the level of, district (*qaḍā'*) capitals, together with some of the principal villages of tribes hostile to the Barzani. The main roads were used by the army in constant danger of ambushes. Barzan village itself and the vicinity were usually respected by both sides as neutral territory—despite the initial air attack. This was in honour of Shaykh Aḥmad Barzani, Mullā Muṣṭafā's elder brother, who regarded the rising as an unjustifiable expenditure of Kurdish blood and continuously declared his loyalty to Qassem, a position which the younger brother grudgingly respected.

¹⁵ *INA*, Sept. 26, 1961.

¹⁶ Private information; Schmidt (p. 79) gives the day as September 19.

¹⁷ *Ahālī*, Oct. 10, 1961.

The Kurdish forces were divided into two sections, roughly on a territorial basis. The northern sector was held by the tribal levies more immediately under Mullā Muṣṭafā; the eastern sector, south of the Ako territory, by the KDP-organized forces under the command of Jalāl Ṭālabānī, who quickly developed from a party politician and journalist into a capable military organizer and field commander.

* * *

The Kurdish forces permanently mobilized in this large area probably did not exceed fifteen thousand, of whom less than five thousand were the permanent tribal retinue of Mullā Muṣṭafā. This hard core—the Pesh Merga—was stiffened by Kurdish regular officers who had deserted from the Iraqi army. However, a larger number was actually under arms at any given time, since a reserve of many thousands—twenty thousand is a reasonable estimate—was called to active service by a rough-and-ready system of rotation, each man serving for a few weeks, or for one defined operation.

This army was poorly organized and poorly armed by modern standards. Units were identified by their commanders, and their commanders' commanders, in the absence of a systematic order of battle. There were no supporting units, because of the lack of heavy weapons, and no services, because of the lack of qualified personnel. There were no formal ranks. No uniforms were worn, although the Barzani were distinguished by their red headdresses, and the KDP command in the south-east tried to develop some khaki conformity among its fighters. There were no permanent headquarters at any level; Mullā Muṣṭafā himself moved about with his staff. The armaments of the Kurds were of the lightest type—rifles, sub-machineguns, light machineguns, light mortars. Their radio equipment was insufficient to cover the distances involved, although good enough for the interception of enemy messages at tactical level. Apparently no motor transport was available. Mullā Muṣṭafā regarded the lack of heavy weapons as his most serious drawback. To the outside observer the total lack of physicians appears almost as serious, and more tragic in human terms: few armies would have been able to bear the absence of medical facilities as the Kurds did.

Indeed, many of these deficiencies were mitigated or cancelled out by the nature of the country, by the structure of Kurdish society, and by the peculiar qualities of the Kurdish warrior. The logistic demands of the Kurdish forces were too simple to allow their primitive organization to become too great a handicap. A stock of firearms was built up, and losses

made good, from war booty taken off the Iraqi army and its auxiliaries, and the contents of both army and police depots in the north, channelled to the Kurdish fighters by their sympathizing personnel. The purchase of arms and ammunition on the black markets of the Middle East, mainly in Beirut, seems to have played a secondary role. Ammunition always remained in shorter supply than arms, largely because fire discipline was not a Kurdish habit. It may be taken as established that no Western power supplied the Kurds, contrary to Qassem's charges. Equally it may be understood from the stand taken by the communist parties of Iraq and elsewhere that the Kurds received no aid from the Soviet Union or other communist countries.

The almost complete absence of motorized transport was not a severe disadvantage in a country with few serviceable roads. Moreover, the existing highways, including the Iraqi section of the famed road from Erbil via Ruwandiz to Lake Rezaieh, were soon blocked by sabotage.

The rebellious areas were largely self-sufficient as regards food and clothing. Necessary purchases were made without great difficulty in the larger towns, under the eyes of the Iraqi garrisons.

The monetary needs of the insurgents were covered from a "war tax of ten per cent" levied on the villages under their control. Agents throughout Iraq raised whatever contributions the circumstances permitted. Funds were also raised among the Kurds in countries where political and legal obstacles to such activities were slight, such as in Lebanon, and probably in Syria and Iran¹⁸. Some considerable windfalls in cash fell in war booty.

The fighting qualities of the Kurd have often been described. Brave, tireless, cheerful, trained since childhood in the use of light weapons, the Kurdish tribesman was exactly suited to the warfare expected of him. As a rule he far surpassed the Arab soldier brought from the plains, despite all the advantages of better training and discipline enjoyed by the latter.

* * *

Arrayed against the Kurdish insurgents were the Iraqi army—ground and air forces—and Kurdish auxiliaries. From the end of 1961 the Second Division was progressively reinforced by infantry and supporting units. At the time of Qassem's death eight of the twelve effective infantry brigades of the Iraqi army were in Kurdistan. In the summer of 1962 the headquarters of the First Division, normally at Diwaniya, moved to the vicinity of Mosul. It assumed responsibility for that sector of the front which

¹⁸ *Hayāt*, Sept. 20, 1961; private information.

roughly corresponded to the "Barzani sector" on the Kurdish side, while the Second Division headquarters at Kirkuk retained responsibility for the eastern sector, opposite the "KDP sector" of Tālabānī. No unified operational command was established. At the outset of the insurrection Qassem had been reported to be "personally directing the campaign¹⁹." The statement undoubtedly soon lost what truth it had ever held.

The Iraqi air force at that time disposed of about six fighter squadrons, most of them equipped with Hunter and Mig jets, and one squadron of Ilyushin-28 fighter-bombers.

The *jash*, "little donkeys," as the Kurdish auxiliaries were called by their enemies, were recruited in the main from the greatest tribes hostile to the Barzani—the Zibar and the Bardost. Other tribes, and even Barzani families anxious to preserve their standing with Baghdad, also contributed. The number of auxiliaries at times exceeded ten thousand, but dwindled as the campaign became more dangerous and less rewarding. They were paid, and to some extent armed, by the government, but remained organized on a clan basis. Apparently they received no army leadership beyond the most general directions.

* * *

Neither side in the Kurdish war during Qassem's regime adopted a bold military strategy. The insurgents were content to consolidate their hold over the open country by destroying the villages of clans cooperating with the government and driving the inhabitants across the frontiers or into the plain. They did not seriously try to take the towns or the few strongly fortified encampments of the Iraqi army inside their territory. The Kurds displayed greatest initiative in their attempts to prevent the army from maintaining communications with these enclaves. Much effort was spent on making the roads impassable by blocking the many defiles with boulders or by blowing up bridges. The continual ambushes of army relief and supply columns moving along the lines of communication provided the main combat feature of the war. The attacks were not hit-and-run affairs. They entailed the immobilization and, if possible, break-up of very considerable bodies of troops, through assault, starvation and demoralization. Some of these actions cost the government forces upward of a thousand casualties. They were so successful that the army frequently resorted to dropping supplies to outlying garrisons by air—a costly and ineffective system which landed great quantities of much needed stores on the Kurdish side.

¹⁹ *Daily Telegraph*, Oct. 10, 1961.

The government did not attempt a resolute military offensive aimed at annihilation of the insurgents and occupation of their territory, as its Ba'ṯhi successor was to do in the summer of 1963. The regular ground forces remained on the defensive, entrenched in their camps and barracks. Operations did not extend beyond the endeavour to keep supply lines open, the blockade of the rebel territory, and occasional punitive forays. The Kurdish auxiliaries were mostly employed to carry out the scorched-earth actions connected with the last-mentioned activities: the burning of crops, slaughter of livestock, demolition of houses and looting—dirty work by Western standards, but age-old practices in the tribal warfare of Kurdistan. Combat action between the insurgents and *jash* decreased with time. The Barzani and their allies certainly had no monopoly of fighting qualities, but they had what Qassem's Kurdish auxiliaries lacked: inspired leadership and a cause that went beyond tribal rivalries. To fight against Mullā Muṣṭafā became increasingly dishonourable in Kurdish eyes, and the better elements ceased to be attracted to the government side.

The main burden of the government war effort was borne by the air force, as it had been during the Kurdish troubles of the 1930s and early 1940s. From September 1961 to the virtual cease-fire of January 1963 no village or gathering of people throughout the Kurdish-held territory was safe, during daytime, from sudden air attack. The tactics employed were simple: single aircraft, usually Mig jet fighters, machinegunned anything in sight; rockets and bombs were also used on occasion. Since the attacks were generally unconnected with ground operations their main objective must have been to terrorize the population of the insurgent area. Perhaps another, less rational purpose was involved: of avenging the humiliation suffered by the government forces in the only feasible way. Since the Kurds had neither aircraft nor anti-aircraft weapons it was indeed a safe way. It was effective too, if measured by the destruction wrought: officers of Mullā Muṣṭafā's staff estimated that as early as January 1962 five hundred villages had been strafed and eighty thousand people rendered homeless, and in June of that year an official Kurdish source gave the number of killed in air attacks as fifty thousand²⁰. During the summer of 1962 the air attacks increased in frequency, intensity and effectiveness. But in its aim of demoralizing the Kurds this method of warfare failed.

In the actual fighting the casualties sustained by the insurgents were undoubtedly much smaller than those of the Iraqi army. Army prisoners were generally set free, unless their rank or special accomplishments made their detention worth the trouble of guarding them. It was not an unsound

²⁰ As n. 7 above.

policy, since released prisoners were not eager to return to battle, and hardly raised morale. Their treatment while in captivity seems to have been as humane as circumstances allowed; but intertribal warfare was savage and the practices of Mullā Muṣṭafā's contingents, including the Assyrians, were as bad as those of the *jash*.

* * *

What were the ultimate aims of both sides? What were their overall policies?

The Kurds wanted autonomy. This target antedated the outbreak of open hostilities. It had been expressed on solemn occasions ever since the 1958 revolution—when the Provisional Constitution was discussed, when *Kha-bat* was first published, during the fifth congress of the KDP. With the insurrection autonomy became the official war aim, freely communicated at home and abroad. The Kurdish leadership explicitly reserved the right of the Kurds to secession and independence: it was of their own free will, they claimed, that they chose to retain the citizenship of a sovereign state with a large Arab majority. The conditions of autonomy for long remained undefined. However, they always included the creation of a Kurdistan administrative unit, the allocation to that unit of a considerable proportion of the oil royalties, full educational independence, and limitations on the posting of non-Kurdish units to Kurdistan. [Contacts made with the Ba'ṯh conspirators since the spring of 1962 (see below), and especially the advanced stage of negotiation reached early in 1963 after Qassem's downfall, compelled the Kurds to formulate their concepts with precision. Their final conditions elaborated the basic points mentioned and added the stipulation that the President of Iraq as well as the Chief of the General Staff should have Kurdish deputies. The autonomous area was then defined as the whole of Erbil, Sulaimaniya and Kirkuk provinces, and "the districts and subdistricts populated by a Kurdish majority in the two provinces of Mosul and Diyala²¹." The delimitation was dangerously vague and probably dictated by the desire to bring under Kurdish control as many oilfields as possible.

Autonomy having become a *sine qua non* for a return to the political community of Iraq, the insurgents had their policy prescribed for them: in the military sphere it would be essential to consolidate under their

²¹ The Kurdish proposals for "autonomy" and the Ba'ṯhi government's proposals for "decentralization" were published in *IT*, June 12, 1963; also as an appendix in Adamson, based on another translation which appeared in *Bulletin of the Republic of Iraq*, London, July 1963.

authority as large a part of Iraqi Kurdistan as possible; in the political sphere, there were two possibilities: either to reach an agreement with Qassem or to work for his overthrow.

The Kurds attained their military objective to some extent. Whether they could have arrived at a political accommodation with Qassem is doubtful whatever Qassem's attitude might have been, since Mullā Muṣṭafā had convinced himself that Qassem lied whenever he opened his mouth, while the more sophisticated Ibrāhīm Aḥmad soberly believed that Qassem had gone out of his mind. But the matter was not put to the test, for Qassem refused throughout to make any concessions whatsoever (see below).

There remained the alternative of reaching an understanding with Qassem's possible successors. The only partners to such an agreement could be the nationalists, since the communists, despite all their grudges, would not work for Qassem's overthrow. Initially the insurgents had difficulty in establishing contacts with the nationalists. The KDP was widely regarded as a communist fellow-traveller, and the Arab nationalists had no sympathy for Kurdish aspirations. However, early in 1962 Ibrāhīm Aḥmad succeeded in communicating with Col. Ṭāhir Yaḥyā al-Takrītī, the former Director-General of Police, who was an acquaintance and whom Aḥmad supposed rather than knew to be engaged on a fresh conspiracy against Qassem.

As it happened Aḥmad had hit upon a central figure of the group of officers and retired officers working with the Ba'th. After the first rapport Aḥmad offered Kurdish cooperation in return for the grant of autonomy to be proclaimed on Qassem's downfall. After several months had passed Yaḥyā signified his agreement and that of his friends by word of mouth. He also asked for the name of six Kurdish candidates for Cabinet posts. The KDP referred to Mullā Muṣṭafā, who decided on Jalāl Ṭālabānī, 'Umar Muṣṭafā, Fu'ād 'Ārif, and three others. Significantly, only the first two were KDP members. As significantly, Aḥmad was excluded, although he himself later claimed that he had wished to remain outside the Cabinet in order to care for the party. Later still, during the first days of 1963, there was a direct KDP-Ba'th meeting, Ṣālīḥ Yūsufī representing the former and 'Alī Ṣālīḥ al-Sa'dī the latter.

It is claimed on the Kurdish side that Sa'dī had accepted without reservation a Kurdish demand for "autonomy" (*ḥukm dhātī*), and that the term "decentralization" (*lāmarkaziyya*) which was to bedevil later negotiations was not even mentioned. However, no written undertaking was obtained. Sa'dī was not eager to let the Kurds into the operational secrets of the intended coup. But it was agreed that if they failed the conspirators should take refuge in the Kurdish-held territory, and that for this reason as much

as any other the Kurds should be informed of D-day well in advance. The last arrangement was not kept, either because the Ba'ṯhi remained suspicious of their allies or because the coup was hurried through earlier than planned. The news of Qassem's overthrow took the Kurds by surprise.

* * *

The stand Qassem maintained on the Kurdish rebellion was rigid and barren in the extreme. The insurgents were traitors and mutineers in the service of imperialism. They were ingrates repaying with crime and abuse a government which had always had their interests at heart, economic, social, cultural. Their grudges were mere pretence; section 3 of the Provisional Constitution had established that the Arabs and Kurds were partners in the Iraqi homeland, and thereby settled any possible claim, solved any problem, in the national sphere. Qassem was not vindictive; he was prepared to forgive and forget, to expend money and effort on the repair of war damages. But first the rebels must lay down their arms and surrender; on this point there could be no discussion. This was what Qassem had announced to the nation at his press conference of September 23, 1961, and continued to maintain until his end. Of genuine concessions to Kurdish nationalism—of the possibility of such a concession—there was never so much as a hint. On January 10, 1963, he gave the insurgents another ultimatum “to return to the right path.” The ultimatum was to expire after ten days, at “this minute, on January 20.” It implied a cease-fire on the part of the government for the duration, and was twice renewed, the second time until the end of February²².

Qassem had not been satisfied with public declarations only. He had several times established secret contact with Mullā Muṣṭafā through high-ranking army officers in the north²³. But since he offered nothing except pardon and reconstruction, and insisted on surrender first, there was no chance of reaching an agreement.

This being Qassem's policy, his only alternative was subjection of the rebels by force. It is surprising that in pursuit of this conclusion he did not make an all-out effort to attain total military victory. His Ba'ṯhi successors attributed his failure to do so to a wish to keep the officers corps occupied away from Baghdad for as long as possible, or even to “feed them into the oven” gradually without danger to himself²⁴. This tortuous

²² *IT*, Jan. 11, 20, Feb. 1, 1963.

²³ For a description of some of these contacts, see Schmidt, pp. 207–8.

²⁴ *Jamāhīr—IT*, May 17, 1963.

interpretation is unlikely to be correct. Insensible of realities as he had become, Qassem remained morbidly sensitive on matters touching his own dignity, and he would not have deliberately tolerated a situation so damaging to his prestige as the successful self-assertion of the Kurds. A simpler explanation would be that Qassem, a professional soldier with combat experience and personal knowledge of Kurdistan, realized that the war could not be ended by purely military means, and he therefore did not wish to waste his army. But Qassem's general behaviour suggests that he was no longer capable of such heroic rationalism. It is quite likely that he now believed his own public assertions that the rebellion was crushed, that the Kurdish people as a whole had returned to its allegiance, and that only isolated pockets of rebels remained, famished, in despair, and on the verge of surrender.

* * *

The Kurdish insurrection, and Qassem's failure to subdue it, largely contributed to the depressing atmosphere of the latter part of Qassem's regime.

The army naturally detested a war which was not only fraught with danger and frustration but thoroughly upset the comfortable routine of the regular officer's normal existence.

The general public disliked the losses, expenditure and dislocations which the war entailed. Moreover, there was a feeling that the indiscriminate air attacks on defenceless villages were as dishonourable as they were futile. Two petitions were submitted over the period to the government, asking it to negotiate a peaceful solution with the Kurds; the first was signed on April 27, 1962, the second on January 25, 1963. The signatories were largely leftist sympathizers, but they included genuine non-party personalities also, like the former Minister of Justice Muṣṭafā 'Alī²⁵. They certainly represented the mainstream of public opinion in the matter. The petitions met with no response except invective from the government-kept newspapers.

The attitude of the communists evinced that complexity which had stultified so many of the decisions they had to take after the summer of 1959. The ICP found that it could not support the Kurdish struggle for immediate political concessions. The insurrection was bound to impair the common "anti-imperialist" effort of which the Qassem government was still considered the protagonist in Iraq and which had absolute priority.

²⁵ *Mid. Mir.*, April 28, May 12, 1962; Feb. 9, 1963.

It followed that "separatist chauvinism" among the Kurds must be condemned; this included, by implication, the demand for autonomy. On the other hand, the Kurdish associations with the communist movement were too strong to permit an entirely negative attitude. As a way out of this dilemma the communist-issued propaganda strongly denounced "acts of barbarism" committed by forces under the Iraqi government against "innocent villagers." On the constructive side the government was asked to take the initiative for a settlement which would secure Kurdish "national and individual rights," but on the basis of "Iraqi unity"—the formula which the KDP itself had usually employed during the honeymoon with Qassem. The ICP adhered to this stand from the outbreak of hostilities in the north until the downfall of the regime²⁶.

²⁶ For an exposition of the communist attitude, see Saadi Ali, "The Events in Iraqi Kurdistan (Letter from Iraq)," *WMR*, March 1962, and Ghassemlou, pp. 246-55.

CHAPTER 28 FOREIGN AFFAIRS

RELATIONS WITH THE UAR

The lethargy that settled over the political scene from about mid-1960 had its counterpart in the official relations between the Baghdad and Cairo governments. It is obvious that Abdel Nasser had ceased to count on the imminent overthrow of Qassem. The attacks of the Egyptian press diminished in frequency and fierceness. The UAR put no obstacles, direct or indirect, to prevent the participation of Iraqi delegations at inter-Arab gatherings. Similarly, the UAR was again represented on such occasions at Baghdad. A show of mutual toleration was achieved during the conference of Arab Foreign Ministers which convened at Baghdad from January 30 to February 4, 1961. Dr. Maḥmūd Fawzī, the UAR Foreign Minister, was received by Qassem. Nationalist crowds at Baghdad on this occasion again shouted for *wahda* and Abdel Nasser, for the first time for over two years.

It is, however, equally obvious that nothing had changed basically in the relationship between the two regimes. The attitudes which had formed under the shocks, fears and betrayals of Qassem's first year in office were not dissipated by inertia. Full diplomatic relations were never resumed. The outbursts of "free" Iraqis in the UAR against Qassem were not hindered. The UAR mass communication media, although restrained by comparison with 1959, had rarely a good word for Qassem, and often bad words. Qassem on his part proved that he was on his guard as much as ever. The cordial relationship which quickly developed between Iraq and Jordan after King Hussein, under the stress of his own fears of the UAR, had recognized the Iraqi Republic on October 1, 1960, was one proof. Even more significant was Qassem's attitude to Syria after her secession from the UAR on September 28, 1961. During the crisis Qassem had behaved with reasonable correctness, although even then his hopes for the success of the Damascus coup were barely disguised¹. However, once Abdel Nasser had indicated his resignation to the latest state of affairs,

¹ For details, see *MER*, 1961, pp. 148-9.

Qassem made his collaboration with the new Syrian rulers the axis of his Arab policy. The rulers at Damascus, insecure and none too popular with the Arab public, responded wholeheartedly. The high point was a three-day conference which took place between Qassem and President Nāzim al-Qudsī at Abu Kemal, just across the Iraqi frontier, on March 14-16, 1962. Although the two statesmen took care to deny that they had discussed any political union on the lines of a "Fertile Crescent" plan, Cairo reacted with a fresh outburst of insinuations and abuse. The rapid series of visits and agreements which followed the summit meeting did nothing to improve the atmosphere between Cairo and Baghdad. Just before Qassem's downfall there was another crisis, over the alleged interference of the UAR Embassy in the Iraqi students' strike and the expulsion of a UAR diplomat which followed (see below, pp. 360-1). The excitement gave zest to the enthusiasm displayed in Cairo for the 14th Ramaḍān coup, although undoubtedly no hesitations would have hampered the Egyptian welcome had there not been such a prelude.

Neither the superficial relaxation of tension in Iraqi-UAR relations, nor the continuation of the underlying enmity, can be said to have directly influenced the fate of Qassem's regime. Intermittent signs of a *détente* may have boosted Qassem's standing among the moderates in Iraq who deplored the country's isolation from the mainstream of Arabdom. But Qassem's committed enemies—as usual a more important factor than the lukewarm or fair-minded elements—were not appeased.

* * *

THE KUWAIT AFFAIR

A failure of Qassem's Arab policy which also had some bearing on his relationship with the UAR as well as with the West was the Kuwait affair. ✓

On June 19, 1961, notes were exchanged between Britain and Kuwait terminating the 1899 agreement between the two countries, which had designated Kuwait practically a British protectorate. Britain reiterated her readiness "to assist the Government of Kuwait if the latter request such assistance." The exchange was made public in London and Kuwait on that day, and Shaykh 'Abdallah al-Ṣabāḥ, the Ruler of Kuwait, announced in a formal proclamation of independence that his country would apply for membership of the Arab League and the United Nations².

For a brief period in the late 1930s King Ghazi had agitated for the cession of Kuwait to Iraq, and in 1958 Nuri put out feelers for the ad-

² *The Times*, Ḥayāt, June 20, 1961.

mission of Kuwait to the Arab Federation of Iraq and Jordan. But the relationship between Iraq and Kuwait since Qassem's rise to power had been neighbourly and easy; if anything, the common fear of Cairo-directed subversion had given it special warmth. The initial announcements of Baghdad Radio concerning Kuwait's new status were friendly³.

However, Qassem's cable of congratulations to the Ruler was a sign of things to come. He welcomed the abrogation of "the illegal and forged" agreement of 1899 concluded in the name of the then "Qā'imaqām of Kuwait in the province of Basra." He warned the Ruler to expect new imperialist subterfuges which would never deceive Iraq. He sent his good wishes to "brotherly Kuwait." He did not mention Kuwait's independence⁴.

Five days later, on June 25, the storm broke. At a press conference held on that day Qassem laid claim to Kuwait as a district of Basra province which had been alienated for over sixty years, but which was an integral part of Iraq. Notwithstanding the intrigues of imperialism, Qassem hoped that the "honourable shaykh" would cooperate in the reintegration of the *qaḍā'*, in his legal capacity as *qā'imaqām*, district commissioner⁵. Qassem did not threaten war if his demand were rejected, but the tenor of his announcement, as well as several obscure and contradictory insinuations it contained, did not preclude that possibility. His mood was underscored by Baghdad Radio, which on this and the following day filled the air with martial music.

The substance of Qassem's claim was that in the second half of the nineteenth century Kuwait had been recognized as a *qaḍā'* of Basra Vilayet in the Ottoman Empire; the British government acknowledged it as such as late as 1913. Yet the Porte had never exercised effective control over the ruling Şabāḥ family. Kuwait had been associated with Britain—apart from the ties established by the 1899 agreement—during the Mesopotamian campaign in World War I, and the accession of Kuwait to the mandated territory of Iraq had certainly never been considered afterwards. The native Kuwaitis as certainly had never expressed a wish to be ruled from Baghdad. Iraqi nationals indeed formed the largest group of non-Kuwaiti Arabs residing in the Shaykhdom—there was an even larger number of Iranians—but there are no signs that they had ever organized in favour of an *Anschluss*.

* * *

³ R. Baghdad, June 20—IMB, June 21, 1961.

⁴ *Zamān*, June 21, 1961.

⁵ R. Baghdad, June 25 [27], 1961.

When first asserted there can be no doubt that Qassem's claim to Kuwait was popular among the Iraqi public. Outside Iraq it was generally rejected, although in differing terms of disapprobation⁶. On July 1 British and Saudi Arabian troops entered Kuwait at the request of the government, to assist the small Kuwaiti army to repulse a possible Iraqi attack. Their appearance added a useful argument to the Arab case against Qassem: it was his greed and aggressiveness that had opened the door for a return of British occupation forces to Arab soil. The despatch of a composite Arab force followed, the first contingent of which arrived at Kuwait on September 10. With their establishment the British force became unnecessary, and its withdrawal was completed on October 10, 1961.

Qassem and the Iraqi Foreign Ministry protested against the entry of foreign troops into Kuwait and never ceased to assert that the claim of Iraq would be pursued by peaceful means alone. They specifically denied that Iraqi troop movements had taken place in the vicinity of the Kuwaiti frontier. Otherwise Qassem rigidly maintained his claim to his last day.

Qassem scored a diplomatic victory when Kuwait's application for membership to the United Nations was vetoed, on November 30, 1961, by the Soviet Union in the Security Council. The Soviet representative argued that Kuwait had remained, in fact, a British colony, and that the admission of Kuwait meant "prejudging the subject of the controversy between Arab states⁷." But it was Qassem's only achievement. Kuwait had already been admitted to the Arab League on July 20 by the unanimous vote of its council—the Iraqi delegate had withdrawn under protest before the voting. Thereupon Iraq ceased all cooperation with the League.

As Kuwait gained recognition from additional countries, Qassem took the bit between his teeth in a manner reminiscent of the West German Hallstein Doctrine. On December 26, 1961, Hāshim Jawād, the Foreign Minister, declared that Iraq would have to "reconsider her attitude regarding her diplomatic relations with countries who established such relations with Kuwait⁸." In consequence, Iraqi ambassadors were recalled from all capitals which had received Kuwaiti ambassadors, although otherwise diplomatic relations were preserved. During 1962 the list became extended

⁶ The official UAR attitude distinguished between "annexation", which was what Qassem wanted, and was found objectionable, and "a unanimous expression of Arab popular will based on free choice," the formula considered to be the basis of the union between Egypt and Syria (*R. Cairo*, June 27 [29], 1961).

⁷ *MER*, 1961, p. 137.

⁸ *R. Baghdad*, Dec. 26—*IMB*, Dec. 27, 1961.

to include such intrinsically friendly countries as Jordan, Lebanon and Tunisia in the Arab world, and Japan, India and the United States outside.

* * *

Further aspects of the embroilment with Kuwait that remain to be examined are Qassem's probable motives and its effect on his position at home and abroad.

When the crisis broke speculations were advanced that Qassem did not really wish to annex Kuwait, but that he had a hidden purpose. It was asserted that he wanted to increase his bargaining power in other spheres; that he wished to counteract UAR influence in Kuwait by a demonstration of strength; or that he thought he would be able to extort money from the Ruler. Subsequent developments do not show that Qassem had secondary motives. Also, Qassem might conceivably have tried to occupy Kuwait and leave explanations until later. But it is certain that Qassem's protestations of peaceful intentions were the plain truth. All evidence points to the absence of any Iraqi troop movements connected with the planning of an offensive. Moreover, after the outbreak of the Kurdish war the southern half of Iraq remained garrisoned by a single infantry brigade. It must be concluded that Qassem seriously believed not merely in the historic justice of his claim, but its political feasibility as well. Thus, without any operational provisions on his side, Qassem apparently thought that his mere notification would land a neighbouring country of strategic importance and with the highest oil output in the Middle East in his lap. His assumption that, once rejected, the demand stood a chance of ultimate acceptance through reiteration and diplomatic sulking is a reflection on his statecraft at that time.

The effect of the Kuwait affair on Qassem's prestige was shattering. He had not only failed; he had failed once again ridiculously and despicably where he had set out to gather riches and glory. The initial acclaim of the Iraqi public soon gave way to scoffing, and then to complete indifference. The foreign press ceased even to pay Qassem the respect of regarding him as a reckless aggressor or a deep intriguer. It became the general opinion that Qassem had fallen victim to "one of his periodic brainstorms" and no longer knew how to extricate himself⁹.

In the result, the Kuwait affair involved Qassem in fresh difficulties with the West and the Arab world, just when the waters around him had begun to calm after the storms of his first two years. His maniacal obsti-

⁹ *The Economist*, July 1, 1961.

nacy caused him needlessly to weaken his links with just those Arab states who were his natural allies against Egyptian aspirations¹⁰.

At the beginning of 1962 Qassem ordered the exhibition in Baghdad of three army vehicles—one British, one Jordanian and one Saudi Arabian—which had on different occasions strayed across the undemarcated desert frontier between Kuwait and Iraq. According to an official source they were to “become a symbol of triumph of the Iraqi people over their enemies¹¹.” This inanity shows better than lengthy analysis where Iraq had landed on its journey under Qassem.

RELATIONS WITH THE OIL COMPANIES

It would be outside the scope of this study to examine Qassem’s oil policy in detail¹², but its bearings on the political history of Iraq at this period must be traced.

During the first two years of his regime Qassem stood by his initial assurances that agreements with the oil companies would be honoured. In general, their relations with the government were unaffected by Dr. Ibrāhīm Kubba’s Marxist proclivities, or by the convulsions of Shawwāf’s revolt and the Kirkuk massacre.

The atmosphere was first seriously disturbed in July 1960, when the government raised the port dues on oil shipments from Basra by a stupendous twelvefold, from 23.4 fils to 280 fils per ton. The Basra Oil Company, a subsidiary of the IPC, strongly protested, and the export of oil through Basra was suspended.

Qassem had indicated from the first that his government aspired to a greater share than its predecessor had taken in the management of and the revenues from the country’s greatest natural asset. Negotiations on this complex issue opened between the Iraqi government and the oil companies on August 15, 1960. They were protracted for over a year, amid crises and adjournments, until they finally broke down on October 11, 1961. The main rounds of talks took place from August to December 1960, in April 1961, and from August to October 1961; contacts were maintained

¹⁰ After Qassem’s downfall Jawād was reported as saying that he had offered to resign when Iraq returned her ambassador from Beirut. “But Qassem threatened me with his revolver” (*R. Beirut*, Feb. 16—*IMB*, Feb. 17, 1963).

¹¹ *INA—IT*, Jan. 8, 1962.

¹² The facts are fully dealt with in the contemporary issues of *Middle East Economic Digest* and *Petroleum Times*. See also *MER*, 1960, pp. 263–4 and *MER*, 1961, pp. 291–2, and Hirst, *Oil and Public Opinion in the Middle East*. pp. 76–99.

and opinions exchanged in the intervals. During the first round of negotiations the Iraqi team was headed by Ṭal'at al-Shaybānī, the Minister of Planning and Acting Minister of Oil Affairs, and in 1961 by Qassem in person, assisted by Muḥammad Ḥadīd as special adviser.

The main Iraqi demands were for increase of the present 50 per cent share in net profits, for a participation of at least 20 per cent in the companies' share capital, for the reversion to the government of that part of the concession area not undergoing actual exploitation, and for a speedier intake of Iraqi personnel¹³. During the period of negotiations Iraq achieved two minor successes of some prestige value to Qassem. In December 1960 the Basra Oil Company resigned itself, under protest, to the higher port dues, and oil exports from Basra were renewed. In June 1961 the IPC gave way, pending arbitration, on the issue of "dead rents"—payments made by the Basra and Mosul Oil Companies before commercial exploitation of their concession areas had started, and regarded by the Iraqi government as an irretrievable bonus.

Qassem showed himself a most unpleasant partner to the negotiations, grasping, verbose, inconsistent and completely unpredictable. He finally broke off the talks after he had put forward a last-minute proposal which he did not give the other side time to study.

On December 11, 1961, the government approved Law No. 80 "For the Definition of Exploitation Areas." This curtailed the concession area of the oil companies by more than 99 per cent, namely, to about 800 square miles undergoing exploitation, with provision made for a reserve, also of 800 square miles¹⁴.

The oil companies protested against the new legislation, but did not dispute its validity. They demanded arbitration. However, they handed over to the government their technical data on the unexploited areas, in accordance with a provision of the law. Meanwhile, British and United States representatives interceded for the companies and asked for a renewal of negotiations. The Iraqi government rejected their proposals, which were condemned as "interference" from outside. The request for arbitration was ignored.

Nevertheless the law had no further practical consequences. Having come perilously close to the brink, the two sides reined in. Qassem had never contemplated surrendering the annual ID 100 million in royalties

¹³ For a twelve-point official statement of Iraqi demands, see *IT*, April 11, 1961. Others were forthcoming on occasion.

¹⁴ Shawwāf, *Ḥawl qaḍīyyat al-naft fi'l 'Irāq*, pp. 189–205. The preamble of the law furnishes the official Iraqi view of the preceding negotiations.

for oil which he knew he could not sell outside the West, and on which the government of the country depended. Nor did the oil companies intend to stop a profitable business while Qassem's vagaries—unpleasant, costly and possibly auguring ill for the future—entailed no crippling damage for the present. The output of oil, at any rate, never suffered.

A National Oil Company was envisaged to exploit the areas over which foreign companies' concessions had been cancelled. The draft of the enabling law was published in September 1962¹⁵. It was due for promulgation early in February 1963, but Qassem's regime met its end first.

The contest with the "imperialistic" oil companies received the enthusiastic support of the Iraqi newspapers at every phase. Their constant baiting may have encouraged Qassem, or may equally have been an embarrassment, impeding his freedom to manoeuvre.

There is no doubt that his handling of the oil negotiations and their aftermath did Qassem great damage with the West. The original British view that he was a match for the communists, and in the circumstances the least undesirable of possible regimes for Baghdad, had slowly been gaining ground in the United States. Now, as a communist takeover was no longer an imminent danger, Qassem had shown himself viciously ill-disposed to the West. He had become expendable on positive as on negative grounds.

¹⁵ *Revolution*, IV, p. 664; *IT*, Sept. 30, 1962.

CHAPTER 29 THE LAST STAGES

Qassem had become unpopular with every class, community, or grouping of the population capable of influencing the balance of forces within the country.

There were no serious allegations that Qassem was personally corrupt. The stories that circulated of his "madness" and "tyranny" were not of the type connected in the public mind with money grabbing. After Qassem's downfall revelations concerning his financial corruption did, indeed, circulate also. It was alleged that he had received three salaries in his three official capacities as Prime Minister, Acting Minister of Defence, and Commander-in-Chief. If true, it is still doubtful whether this practice would have been strictly illegal, according to Iraqi precedents¹. The relative triviality of such charges against a man who could have put his hands on millions with impunity only emphasizes how little was held against Qassem on this count. On the other hand, wild tales were told and accepted concerning his elder brother, Hāmid Qāsim, a small trader before the revolution, who was said to have accumulated a vast fortune by arranging trade licences and capital transfers on the strength of his august connection. Most serious, the inefficiency, chicanery and corruption of government officials was as bad as ever and reflected, of necessity, on the head of the regime.

The estrangement of the political parties and their dependent associations was complete. One party, the KDP, had dissolved under conditions of open warfare, a war that proved dangerous, unprofitable and dishonourable at one and the same time. The Islamic Party had been eliminated while a pretence at tolerance was maintained. The ICP was underground, and its members were suffering persecution just short of physical extermination. The two moderate parties had wasted themselves in internal struggles, and had ceased to operate in sheer resignation.

The nationalists had long since staked everything on another coup. Islam may not have been slighted, but a large part of the population, which

¹ In 1958 it had been expressly stated that Qassem received only his army pay.

placed the interests of religion above every other public consideration, was disposed to suspect slights.

Merchants and industrialists were disillusioned and apathetic, and Qassem's continued struggle with the Iraq Petroleum Company did not remedy the situation. A number of peasants had benefited from agrarian reform, but the proportion of beneficiaries was still small in comparison with needs². The same applied to the wage earner in town and country whose lot may have undergone a slight improvement through social reform and development here and there, although no legislation with the wide scope of the Agricultural Reform Law was undertaken in the industrial sector. But if there was progress it was not dramatic. The official zeal for social reform had died down after the first few months of the revolutionary regime. A few additional social measures were approved, but after the end of 1958 the legislation was scanty, and bore the stamp of the incidental. Moreover, most social provisions legislated throughout Qassem's regime were hard to enforce without a much more rigidly controlled economy than existed in Iraq. Only a driving force of immense energy and singlemindedness could have achieved the sweeping changes the regime had promised in its early youth. Yet Qassem's energy had been driven into different channels, partly by hostile forces, partly by loss of interest through power.

In the sphere of foreign policy Qassem had proved barren. His latest claim to Kuwait brought him discredit. His stand on the oil question had angered and alarmed Britain, while the United States had been suspicious of Qassem's alleged communist proclivities all along. At the same time the Soviet government's support of Qassem was half-hearted. The decline of communist fortunes in Iraq could not fail to cast its shadow over relations between the two countries. Also, there was a widespread feeling that Soviet economic aid was a disappointment, in scope as well as in quality: the Soviet reputation suffered in consequence, with repercussions on mutual good will.

Qassem had not neglected the army. He had expanded it, equipped it lavishly, and gone out of his way to flatter it. The terms of service were even further improved. Nevertheless he had never been identified as the army's natural leader—except when branded as a military dictator by

² By the end of the Qassem regime, 2.96 million dunums had been confiscated under the Agrarian Reform Law, and 1.46 million dunums distributed to 31,500 peasants (*Hamizrah Hehadash*, 1964, Nos. 54–55, p. 241). This was not in itself a negligible achievement, but only one-eighth—at most—of the land scheduled for expropriation had been distributed (see above, p. 59).

hostile critics. The reason has been stated previously in this work: Qassem stood alone. He might pose as the "son of the people" or the "father of the people³," but his title of Sole Leader was no accident. He remained as disdainful of forming around himself an officers' junta as he had been of leading a political party. It was this compulsive aloofness which prevented him from being accepted by the officers corps as one of them, and earned him from that quarter at least as much mistrust and ridicule as his many definable failures had accumulated.

* * *

The question therefore arises, in view of this unsatisfactory situation, what retained Qassem in power over his last two-and-a-half years?

If Qassem's day-to-day tactics since the beginning of 1960 can be assigned any concrete achievement—beyond the feat of staying alive and on top—it must be that he had reduced the passions which had been ravaging the country, by denying them nourishment. Political strife had almost ceased, and if political strife proved to be practically the equivalent of political life, Qassem may have felt that this extinction was a small price to pay after the convulsions of 1958–59. The dullness that was substituted in some ways even acted as a buffer against disappointments. The regime was generally disliked, and provoked ridicule and disrespect; but there was no sense of urgency, and few felt unrestrained hatred. On the other hand there was real fear of the bloodshed which was generally expected to ensue between communists and nationalists if a change was made.

How much credit may be allowed to the various security organizations for prolonging Qassem's rule is difficult to assess. The official departments included the Directorate-General of Security headed by Col. 'Abd al-Majīd Jalil, and the Department of Military Intelligence, under Col. Muḥsin al-Rifa'i. In addition Brig. Ṭaha al-Shaykh Aḥmad, director of planning at the General Staff, and Brig. 'Abd al-Karīm Jidda, commander of the military police, had in effect turned their departments into intelligence services to watch the sympathies of the officers corps, including both the active and retired members. The contribution of these departments to Qassem's survival was probably of greater value than the officially appointed bodies. Lastly, two personal dependents of Qassem, Col. Miḍḥat Amīn, director of the Baghdad Electricity Authority, and one Jabbār Hamza,

³ The last broadcast from Baghdad Radio on the morning of February 8, 1963, before the station was seized by the insurgents, described "the Father of the People" touring Baghdad Harun-al-Rashid-like, as was his wont (*NYT*, Feb. 9, 1963).

are reputed to have set up semi-private agencies for the unearthing of plots. The structure and habits of Iraqi political society made such efforts, intelligently pursued, not to be despised.

The Western powers could not have afforded Qassem physical protection, even if they had been unqualified well-wishers, any more than they could have saved King Fayṣal or Nuri. Yet there is some evidence that British intelligence reports on internal intrigues were put at Qassem's disposal during the earlier part of his regime. If true, it is likely that such aid was withheld later—with what consequences on Qassem's fate none can tell⁴.

The efficiency of the internal security bodies should not be judged by their ultimate failure, however. They were well paid and certainly not hampered by constitutional or operational restraints. The heads of the services were faithful to Qassem, although their personal backgrounds differed. Their subordinates in general did not mix politics with the professional's loyalty to his duties. Certainly, the security services succeeded in foiling many attempts against the regime before they failed. Even then they seem to have given Qassem sufficiently precise warnings to absolve them from a large share of responsibility (see below, p. 365). Nevertheless, it is clear in retrospect that the greatest service of the security organizations to Qassem lay less in their actual, than in their reputed efficiency. The revolutionaries of the 14th Ramaḍān postponed their strike several times because they feared it had been discovered—needlessly, as it became apparent. This over-estimation of the CID and its associates was fully shared by the public at large. It must also have discouraged potential conspirators.

The large military forces which Qassem kept concentrated in and about Baghdad had a similar effect. They turned the Ministry of Defence compound between Rashid Street and the Tigris into a fortified camp. The Nineteenth Brigade, which occupied the Ministry of Defence, was Qassem's old brigade, while the Fifth Division had been commanded since 1960 by Brig. 'Abd al-Jabbār Jawād, Qassem's brother-in-law.

In connection with security problems, it must be asked whether Qassem acted wisely in extending so much clemency to his enemies. His actions had restored to liberty, and often to office and command, some of his most formidable opponents. Was he justified in doing so, even if the lessons to be derived from the executions of the summer of 1959 are taken into account?

⁴ After Qassem's downfall there were widespread rumours that the British and US intelligence services had known of the 14th Ramaḍān coup in advance (e.g., *L'Express*, Feb. 21, 1963).

On balance it cannot be said that his leniency precipitated the danger to himself. The events of February 8, 1963, were not directed by a master brain or by a group of individuals who were irreplaceable for the purpose. The chief beneficiary in the long run, Aref, played an incomparably less significant part than he had on July 14, 1958. If Ṭāhir Yaḥyā and Ḥasan al-Bakr, Ḥāzim Jawād and Shabīb had been in prison at the time, there can be no doubt that others with a similar background and opinions, equally capable and determined, would have taken their place. On the contrary, it was Qassem's policy of forgiving his convicted enemies, above any other single factor, which convinced the public that, although he might be insane, he was not a Stalin⁵. The atmosphere was made tolerable, and enabled Qassem to play an empty hand for a longer period than he had a right to expect.

* * *

The last six weeks before Qassem's downfall were dominated, and envenomed, by a strike of university and secondary-school students in Baghdad.

The occasion was trivial. On December 27, 1962, Munāḍil ("the Struggler") al-Mahdāwī, son of the president of the Special Supreme Military Court and a secondary-school pupil, became involved in an argument with nationalist students over his alleged distribution of communist propaganda, and was beaten up. The Struggler telephoned his father who sent his bodyguard, who in turn beat up Munāḍil's assailants. Thereupon the —illegal—National Federation of Iraqi Students (see above, pp. 320–1) staged a protest demonstration during which one nationalist student was killed. The National Federation then declared a strike which had the sympathy of many teachers from the beginning. A succession of demonstrations led to further clashes with the police; during one, three more students were reported killed. Many students and teachers who upheld the strike were arrested. Among the latter was Dr. 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Dūrī, the nationalist chairman of the Writers Union, and after Qassem's downfall rector of Baghdad University. There were mass expulsions and the detainees staged a hunger strike.

The students' strike had started as a political action by nationalist students, who were joined by their Kurdish colleagues on instructions of the KDP⁶. It soon became almost general, and sympathy strikes followed in Mosul, Ramadi and Falluja. Genuine feelings of solidarity and grievance

⁵ This formulation was common at the time.

⁶ Schmidt, p. 249.

undoubtedly induced many uncommitted students to participate, as did the low standing of the General Students Federation—still the official representative of the student body. In addition, strikes had been a favourite weapon of Iraqi students in the past: they had never been averse to leaving their class-rooms, especially not before mid-term examinations.

The UAR Embassy apparently printed leaflets for the strikers. On January 24, 1963, one of its attachés was expelled for this offence, and two other diplomats were detained by the police for questioning.

The communists were in a difficult position. They had no love for the regime, and the communist-dominated Students Federation had had its fill of trouble with the authorities. But the strike had broken out in protest against "communist interference" at the university, and was managed by the communists' enemies. At first, therefore, the Students Federation denounced the strike as an imperialist intrigue and called upon the students to return to their classes. When soon afterwards the popularity of the strike became clear, and when government strong-arm measures against the students had provided a decent excuse, the federation changed its attitude. Its spokesmen demanded that the authorities settle the strike quickly on the basis of a general reprieve, a promise of "non-interference in student affairs," and the holding of "democratic elections," which the federation obviously believed would still result in a victory for the Left⁷. Even on this occasion it is credibly reported that the ICP leadership remained divided on the strike issue.

Qassem himself did not mention the strike directly in his many public addresses during the six weeks, and only once, apparently, alluded to it indirectly⁸. It is difficult to find a rational explanation for his silence. The government had used police action against educational institutions, and young people had been killed. The strike vitally affected many thousands of students and their families. It was agitating the capital. When Qassem was overthrown it was still continuing in full force.

Although it had no direct bearing on the 14th Ramaḍān coup, the students' strike exposed the decay of Qassem's regime. The simmering quarrel with the UAR flared up anew. The reactions of the general public clearly demonstrated Qassem's unpopularity. His loss of grip on affairs and his rigidity were displayed to the full. Once more the communists dithered in the search for a response to their enemies' initiative. The nationalists were gathering confidence and strength. The end was near.

⁷ An interesting juxtaposition of the earlier and the later communist positions is provided by *Ṣawt al-Ahrār*, Jan. 2 and Jan. 11, 1963.

⁸ *IT*, Jan. 16, 1963.

CHAPTER 30 THE 14TH RAMAḌĀN COUP

The antecedents of the 14th Ramaḍān coup must be traced back to the spring of 1961. By then the Ba'th Party had recovered from the dislocation caused by the failure of the attempt on Qassem's life in the autumn of 1959 and the subsequent flight and arrest of so many of its most active members. A new command had consolidated. The grass-root cadres had resumed activity. In June 1961 the Harakiyeen seceded—or were excluded—from the Nationalist Front, as the Ba'th would no longer tolerate a partner whom it regarded as an unconditional agent of Abdel Nasser. The break strengthened rather than weakened the nationalist underground, since it substituted two manageable and reasonably homogeneous organizations for a weak and disunited confederacy. Finally, the amnesties granted that year restored the leadership which executed the coup in 1963.

The first essay by the revived Ba'th at a trial of strength with the regime was prompted by the Baghdad taxicab drivers' riots of March 1961. The riots were strictly nonpolitical in origin, and were a response to sharp increases in the excise on petrol. The taxicab drivers were hit particularly hard, since the rise in prices was not accompanied by corresponding rises for diesel, and therefore omnibus fares were not affected. On March 28 mobs of taxi drivers demonstrated in the streets, set fire to buses and overturned private cars. The leftist newspapers expressed general sympathy with the drivers. The Ba'th, however, decided that the time was ripe for a show of force. Ba'thi agitators put themselves at the head of the demonstrators; waves of supporters, mostly students, issued from A'zamiyya and inundated the capital with handbills signed by the party calling for revolt. The Ba'th leadership had expected the disturbances to develop into a mass movement which might sweep away the regime¹. They were soon undeceived. The police, joined by the army, cleared the streets and drove the Ba'thi demonstrators back to A'zamiyya with little opposition. A number of rioters—reports vary between three and nineteen—were killed. Even the larger figure cannot be regarded as a high toll in view of the danger to se-

¹ *Jarida*. Feb. 20, 1963, giving an interview with 'Ali Šāliḥ al-Sa'di.

curity that the strike entailed. The many students detained were released after some weeks.

The Ba'th took the lesson to heart. Its further plans were based on close cooperation with sympathetic "Free Officers." The coup was to be effected by army spearheads, reinforced and complemented through mass action organized by the party.

By the end of 1961 a joint Ba'th—Free Officers committee, later to be known as the "National Council of Revolutionary Command" (NCRC), was in existence. The same leadership remained until after the 14th Ramaḍān coup. Its inner circle on the Ba'th side was composed of 'Alī Ṣāliḥ al-Sa'dī, the recently elected regional secretary, Ṭālib Ḥusayn Shabīb, Ḥāzim Jawād, Dr. Muṣāri' al-Rāwī, Ḥamdī 'Abd al-Majīd, the retired officers 'Abd al-Sattār 'Abd al-Laṭīf and 'Abd al-Karīm Muṣṭafā Nuṣrat, and Lt.-Col. Ṣāliḥ Mahdī 'Ammāsh; the last-named was a serving officer until he too was retired a few days before 14th Ramaḍān².

On the army side the chief committee members were Aref, just now released from prison, Col. Ṭāhir Yaḥyā, the former Director-General of Police, and Col. Aḥmad Ḥasan al-Bakr, who had been a member of the military court for two months after the 14th July revolution. Although all three had been retired from army service, they had managed to remain in close touch with the officers corps and can be regarded as its members in everything but the technical sense. Aref, although by no means a figure-head, was less active on the committee than his two colleagues, probably because he felt himself to be under constant surveillance. Other officers closely associated with the committee were Brig. Rashīd Muṣliḥ, retired after the Shawwāf revolt, Col. 'Abd al-Hādī al-Rāwī, one of the original judges of Mahdāwī's court, Col. 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Rāwī, until late in 1961 a battalion commander in the Eighth Brigade and reputedly retired for his refusal to lead his unit against the Kurds, and a number of officers on active service: Col. Khālīd Makī al-Hāshimī, commander of an armoured regiment at Abu Ghayb, Col. 'Ārif 'Abd al-Razzāq, who had been retired for his nationalist sympathies but was reinstated in 1962 as commander of Habbaniya air base; Lt.-Col. Ḥardān al-Takrītī, commander of Kirkuk air base; and Capt. Mundhir al-Wandāwī, a pilot.

² Nuṣrat had been retired from the army as a major on August 19, 1958 (*WI*, No. 18, Aug. 25, 1958, p. 3). If Nuṣrat was retired because of his nationalist orientation, which appears probable, then this was the first political retirement after the revolution of a "free" officer (as distinct from a supporter of the monarchy). If there was another reason, the honour goes to Bakr, similarly retired in September 1958.

The army conspirators were not fully fledged members of the Ba'ṯh, with the exception of Wandāwī. Ḥardān al-Takrītī may have been a member, and Bakr was strongly sympathetic towards the party. The other officers cooperated with the Ba'ṯh on a working basis.

In addition to the committee were many Ba'ṯh Party members and army officers—both active and retired—who were not associated on the policy-making level, but were in the picture and prepared to play their part.

The object of this cooperation was, first, the elimination of "the mad dictator." This was to be followed by a final settlement of accounts with the communists. Lastly, a sincere but not unconditional rapprochement with the UAR was envisaged.

* * *

The conspirators took their time. As noted above, there was a general relaxation of political pressures. From about the summer of 1960 onwards total concealment proved unnecessary for the Ba'ṯh and its sympathizers. The party remained illegal; its members would have to expect trouble if they were discovered while pursuing subversive activities, whether of an organizational or propagandist nature. But the security authorities put no heart into the persecution of Ba'ṯhis, and of nationalists in general, although occasionally cells were unearthed, or leaflets seized³. In this respect, the feelings of the police and government officials coincided with public opinion in general. Ba'ṯh principles did not rouse anything like the feelings of reprehension that were aroused at the communist practices of the spring of 1959. The rule of the Ba'ṯh over certain quarters in Baghdad such as A'zamiyya, and in towns outside the capital such as Ramadi, was allowed to consolidate. The police rarely interfered in the control of these enclaves, or even in the bloody affrays that resulted from the constant efforts of the Ba'ṯhis to penetrate quarters still under communist influence.

The blind-eye attitude adopted by the security services during the last two years of Qassem's regime enabled the Ba'ṯh to organize and train a party militia. By the day of the coup this body was able to take to the streets in its thousands.

According to subsequent reports, a number of attempts to assassinate Qassem and take over the government had been made during 1962. Three dates on which such a coup was to be carried out are given by one such

³ Brig. Jalīl, the director-general of Security, implied as much before his execution following Qassem's downfall (*Jarida*, Feb. 21, 1963). Jalīl had been promoted brigadier in 1962.

source: February 14, July 18, and December 2; on each occasion the air force was to play the chief part⁴. The attempts were abandoned largely through last-minutes fears, later proved groundless, that Qassem had discovered the plot.

Towards the end of the year a further, more specific, plan was worked out, to be implemented on January 19, 1963. The arrangements resembled those followed in the successful coup of 14th Ramaḍān, but less reliance was placed on improvisation, and armoured units were assigned a greater role. This plan was indeed betrayed to Qassem at the last moment. At least fifty officers were retired or detained as a result⁵. The principals, however, escaped arrest.

A new date was set for February 25, on the holiday of 'Īd al-Fiṭr when the state of preparedness to cope with such a situation might be low. But again Qassem was alerted, and arrests were made at the beginning of February. This time three leading Ba'this were detained. Sa'dūn Ḥamādī, just returned from exile, 'Ammāsh, and, most important, the regional secretary himself. Qassem was believed to have gained possession of the complete list of the plotters, military and civilian, and was daily expected to swoop down on them. Thereupon, on February 4, according to a description later given by Aref, the command decided that the safest policy was boldness, and that only immediate action could save the situation. The coup was set for the morning hours of Friday, February 8, 14th Ramaḍān. At that time Qassem, who worked at night, would be asleep in his house in the 'Alwiyya quarter, the streets would be uncongested and most of the officers out of the secret on weekend leave. By an additional stroke of good fortune, Brig. 'Abd al-Jabbār Jawād was ill, and his acting deputy was in the plot. The Kurds, the Harakiyeen, the UAR government, and the Ba'th National Command at Beirut were left in ignorance of zero hour.

After the 14th Ramaḍān rumours circulated that the Ba'th had stolen a march on the Harakiyeen, who were on the point of staging their own coup. But it is doubtful whether the Harakiyeen had ever believed themselves strong enough to take the initiative for such action, and almost certain that they could not have mustered sufficient force to see the action through.

* * *

⁴ *Qisṣat al-thawra fi'l 'Irāq wa-Sūriyya*, pp. 28-31.

⁵ Decrees Nos. 34 of Jan. 6, and 58 and 59 of Feb. 3, 1963 (*IT*, Feb. 14, 1963), name forty-two officers sent into retirement. To judge by precedent, the lists are likely to be incomplete.

On Friday, February 8, 1963, Aref left his home in A'zamiyya early in the morning, "for prayers." At about 8 a.m. he arrived at the headquarters of the Fourth Tank Regiment at Abu Ghrayb, west of Baghdad. There he met Col. Aḥmad Ḥasan al-Bakr, and the two clambered into a tank put at their disposal by the commander, Col. Khālīd Makī al-Ḥāshimī. They returned to Baghdad, safe from interception at least by a light patrol, and drove to Broadcasting House near the right bank of the Tigris. Some of the officers in command of the guard there were in the plot. The rest readily acquiesced. The conspirators took over the building and its services and prepared to announce to the world that the revolution had come. They had been joined by a few of the Ba'thi civilian leaders: Ḥāzīm Jawād, Ṭālib Ḥusayn Shabīb and Sa'dī's fiancée, Hanā' al-'Umārī.

As Aref and Bakr set out from Abu Ghrayb towards Baghdad, Ḥāshimī assembled his regiment and rumbled after them. Before his cumbrous column of tanks had reached its target areas the revolution was ablaze.

While Aref and Bakr were reporting at Abu Ghrayb, Col. 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Rāwī arrived at the headquarters of the Eighth Mechanized Infantry Brigade at Habbaniya, where he had commanded a battalion until the previous year. Rāwī identified himself as the envoy of the impending nationalist revolution, and stated that he had been empowered by the National Council of Revolutionary Command to take charge. The officers in the plot joined in his representations to the brigade commander, who was unenthusiastic and uncooperative, but offered no resistance. The Eighth Brigade then departed for Baghdad under Rāwī.

At 9 a.m. a Hawker-Hunter jet fighter-bomber of the Sixth Squadron from Habbaniyya appeared over Rashīd military airfield to the south-east of Baghdad, where the commander of the Ninth Squadron was suspected of communist sympathies, and ploughed up the runway with bombs. The pilot was Capt. Mundhir al-Wandāwī, who thus committed the first act of violence during the coup. It is doubtful how effective the damage to the runway might have proved if the pilots with their Mig-19 fighters had been determined to join battle. Whatever the reason, the Ninth Squadron did not take to the air. Within a few minutes of the attack on Rashīd airfield an air attack of larger dimensions began on Qassem's place of work, the Ministry of Defence compound on the left bank of the Tigris. The General Staff was located there and the ministry was in every sense the heart of the regime, heavily fortified, well provided with arms, and garrisoned by about two thousand troops from the Nineteenth Brigade. The air attack was carried out from Habbaniyya by three Hawker-Hunters and three Mig-17 fighters, led by Wandāwī. They were joined by Lt.-Col. Takrītī in a Mig-17 from Kirkuk. The attack lasted for about two hours,

the aircraft continually returning to their bases to refuel and load ammunition. The anti-aircraft guns at the Ministry of Defence were active, and one aircraft was shot down. The ministry buildings suffered considerable damage from the bombing attack; most important for the success of the operation, both telephone and radio communications were put out of action.

The first detonations from Rashīd airfield had startled Qassem from his sleep at his house in 'Alwiyya. It is said that his first action was to order the Ninth Squadron to bomb Habbaniyya base, but his message was intercepted and diverted by a nationalist telephonist at Rashīd exchange. Qassem then rushed by armoured car along Rashīd Street to the Ministry of Defence.

Qassem had got through before it was too late. With the first bombings, the signal to go ahead was given to the Ba'ṭhi militia, who for the first time donned their green *al-ḥaras al-qawmī* ("Nationalist Guard") armlets, kept in readiness; at least two thousand men, many armed with submachine-guns, poured out of A'ẓamiyya. After blocking the entrance to A'ẓamiyya against a possible communist assault they took up positions along the highway to Habbaniyya and Abu Ghayb, from where military support was expected. Half of the force, under its commander 'Abd al-Karīm Muṣṭafā Nuṣrat, assembled near the Ministry of Defence, but were not, at first, able to attack in the face of its superior resources. The other half marched south east, under the command of Col. Ṭāhir Yaḥyā, and threw a cordon around Rashīd camp. Rashīd camp housed the headquarters of the Fifth Division and the Nineteenth Brigade, as well as No. 1 Military Prison with the most important concentration of political prisoners in Iraq. In all probability the cordon would have proved illusory, had the troops inside attempted to break it; but they did not.

Also while the first bombs rained on the Ministry of Defence an assassination detachment called on Brig. Jalāl al-Awqātī, Commander of the Air Force, at his residence, and shot him dead on his doorstep.

* * *

When the citizens of Baghdad had been listening to the detonations for nearly one hour, during which time armed civilians bearing green armlets were swarming through the streets and wild rumours were sweeping the city, the tidings of the revolution came onto the air at last.

"Shortly after 9 a.m."⁶ excited voices from Baghdad Radio broadcast "Communiqué No. 1": .

⁶ Thus *IT*, Feb. 11, 1963, its first issue after the 14th Ramaḍān coup.

"Sons of the valiant people, units of our valiant army, listen to this good news: after our heroes, the eagles of the air force, destroyed the den of the criminal traitor, and after all our military units moved forward proclaiming the revolution . . . our brothers, the officers and troops of the Defence Ministry, rose up and killed the criminal traitor . . ."

"... the revolution has been staged to restore the July revolution⁷..."

The announcer was Hāzim Jawād, soon to be appointed spokesman of the new Cabinet; he was relieved, as the hours passed, by Shabīb and Hanā' al-'Umarī. Further communiqués followed in rapid succession. Communiqué No. 2 announced the retirement of 'Abdī and a further seventeen pillars of Qassem in the army, and requested them to surrender themselves to the nearest police station "for protection from the wrath of the revolutionary people"; the order emanated from the National Council of Revolutionary Command—the first time that this body was mentioned in public. Further orders closed the borders and airports, gave instructions to the Nationalist Guard and imposed curfew from 3 p.m. All the time messages of support from army units, individual officers and civilians were broadcast, evidently authentic.

One of the first consequences of the broadcasts was that Šālih Yūsufi and Fu'ād 'Ārif called at Broadcasting House and congratulated the NCRC on the revolution in the name of the Kurds; they also expressed their regret that they had not been given a chance to join in the action⁸.

By about 10 a.m. the Eighth Brigade and the Fourth Tank Regiment were deployed, and provided the nationalist guard with vital stiffening. Detachments of the Eighth Brigade entered Rashīd camp, with Ṭāhir Yaḥyā at their head, and persuaded the commander of the Nineteenth Brigade to join the revolution. The prisoners were released—their presence so far had remained a dangerous pledge in Qassem's hands—and Col. 'Abd al-Hādī al-Rāwī was appointed camp commander. The bulk of the brigade under Col. 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Rāwī joined Nuṣrat's Nationalist Guards in front of the Defence Ministry, together with a few of Hāshimī's tanks.

The siege began in earnest. Apparently the tanks were not supplied with shells for their cannon, but the crews had plenty of rounds for their heavy machine-guns. If—as indeed proved later—the main danger to the rising was likely to come from hostile civilian crowds rather than from the entrenched garrison, the absence of shells would not prove a serious drawback. Other tanks took position on the Bund, the inundation embankment

⁷ *R. Baghdad*, Feb. 8 [9], 1963.

⁸ Schmidt, p. 250.

commanding the sprawling slums to the east, thus indicating where sympathy for Qassem was believed to be most firmly rooted. Col. Hāshimī had in the meantime been appointed commander of armoured troops, Baghdad area.

* * *

The army precautions against possible communist countermeasures came none too soon. The communists had not been entirely surprised by the coup, as many people in Baghdad with a sense for political atmosphere had felt for weeks that some dramatic development was impending. But the communists were mistaken in their assessment of the popular force which stood behind the officers' rising. Rumours of British and American intrigues to overturn Qassem had led them to expect a putsch by a narrow clique of officers, with massive Western aid in money, material and, perhaps, airborne troops⁹. They were not prepared for the appearance of an armed mass militia. Equally important, they may not have realized the extent to which communist influence had been extirpated from army and police. The nationalist officers could give their orders and have them obeyed; most police stations, within an hour of the first communiqué, had their complements of Nationalist Guards ready to withstand any assault on the armouries. Lastly, the communists had been sapped in strength and spirit; most of their leaders were in prison or exile, their cadres were spied upon and broken, their organization dislocated.

However, the communist demonstrators started to muster at about 10 a.m. in Karrāda, 'Aqd al-Kird, Kadhimain and other quarters where the ICP had retained some power. They tried to force their way down Abū Nu'ās Street to relieve the Ministry of Defence. Hastily they distributed mimeographed handbills calling on citizens to rise against reaction and save the country's independence—the latter danger was heavily emphasized¹⁰. They were poorly armed and worse led; hundreds were mown

⁹ See a manifesto of the ICP dated Jan. 3, 1963, translated in *Kol Haam*, Israel, March 25, 1963; also an article by 'Azīz al-Hājj in *Rude Pravo-R. Prague*, Feb. 21—*SWB*, EE/1182, Feb. 22, 1963.

¹⁰ According to Hāzim Jawād two such appeals were issued, one at 10.30 a.m., the other at 3 p.m., on February 8 (*IT*, Feb. 25, 1963). One of the statements is reproduced in *Qisṣat al-thawra fi'l 'Irāq wa-Sūriyya*, p. 31. An interesting feature is its cavalier treatment of Qassem who is mentioned only once halfway through: "The Leader 'Abd al-Karim, 'Abdī, Mahdāwī and the other officers who defend our national independence are holding fast to the command of the army."

down by the army and militia. Their intervention made no impact on the events of the day.

* * *

The military battle languished. The air attacks on the Defence Ministry ceased after ground forces had taken up positions, at about 10.30 a.m. Fire was exchanged between the besiegers and the besieged, but it was desultory and few casualties are known. Nor was the siege cordon tight, a fact which worked in Qassem's disfavour; it is estimated that of the original 2,000 troops stationed in the ministry compound some 1,500 found an opportunity to sneak away during the midday hours. However, an officer carrying a tape-recorded appeal from Qassem to the people, for broadcasting from an emergency station at Qaṣr Zuhūr, was captured by the besiegers.

There was some fighting at Tājī camp, 10 miles north of Baghdad, when an army detachment arrived to take over the important radar installations there. By 2 p.m. at latest the station was in the hands of the revolutionaries. At Washshāsh, the second large military camp in the Baghdad area, a communist subaltern made a feeble attempt to organize armed resistance, and surrendered without a shot being fired. At Ba'Quba, in an army camp adjacent to Third Division headquarters, a more ambitious attempt to counter the coup was carried out by some thirty communist soldiers, including two subalterns and a few civilians; the latter were evidently ICP members sent up from Baghdad to provide guidance. This action also was overcome with ease, most of the garrison being either antagonistic or indifferent. In the scuffle which preceded the surrender of the communists two nationalist officers and one soldier were killed¹¹.

These appear to be the only incidents which occurred within the army during the takeover; in the context of a nation-wide upheaval they were trifling.

The bulk of the army sat on the fence while the contest went on in Baghdad. There can be no doubt that its attitude was initially influenced by the first rebel broadcasts which gave out false reports of Qassem's death.

* * *

¹¹ Twenty-five of the Ba'Quba "counter-revolutionaries"—one civilian and twenty-four military personnel—were subsequently executed (*IT*, March 13, 1963). It was the greatest judicial mass execution held in an Arab country since World War II.

In the afternoon a would-be intermediary visited the Ministry of Defence; this was Yūnis al-Ṭā'ī the publisher of *al-Thawra*. He was known equally as a fervent trumpeter of Qassem's greatness, a communist-hater and a supporter of an all-Arab rapprochement. He managed to see Qassem, who is reported to have offered to resign in favour of 'Abdī. If this proposal was indeed made, it did not testify to Qassem's grasp of the situation. However, his suggestion apparently spurred the revolutionaries to action. As darkness fell, at about 5.30 p.m., the tanks and armoured cars under the command of Nuṣrat burst into the compound and obtained the surrender of the six hundred officers and soldiers who had so far remained at their posts. The Defence Ministry had fallen, but the revolutionaries still did not care to comb its inner recesses.

Qassem and a few of his intimates stayed for some hours barricaded in the main building. Here, between 9 and 10 p.m., they first heard over Qassem's transistor radio who were the men at the head of the rising. Ṭaha Yaḥyā and Rashīd Muṣliḥ were named the new Chief of the General Staff and Military Governor General respectively; Aref's appointment as President of the Republic followed, and immediately afterwards the list of the new Cabinet¹². At about midnight Qassem left the compound through an unguarded side door and entered Sha'b Hall (also known as Amāna Hall, since it was the property of the city government—*amānat al-āṣima*), adjacent to the north. He was accompanied by Maḥdāwī, Ṭaha al-Shaykh Aḥmad and Lt. Kan'ān Khalīl Ḥaddād, his bodyguard. 'Abd al-Karīm al-Jidda, commander of the military police, and Waḥfī Ṭāhir, Qassem's principal aide, lay buried under the debris of the ministry.

The following account of Qassem's last twelve hours is based on the testimony, direct or indirect, of his enemies and killers. In the small hours of the morning of Saturday, February 9, he contacted Aref at Broadcasting House over the telephone. He begged Aref, in the name of their erstwhile brotherhood, for a safe-conduct to Turkey or Austria. Aref replied that he would not let Qassem cheat him again, and that he would not allow Qassem to become "another Tshombe." However, if Qassem wanted to talk, he should surrender at 7 a.m. at the entrance of Sha'b Hall, with raised hands and without his badges of rank¹³.

Qassem did not fulfil these conditions to the letter, but at 8.30 a.m. he and his companions were arrested inside the building and conducted in two armoured cars to Broadcasting House. There they were confronted by Aref, Bakr and other Free Officers. Aref violently abused Qassem to

¹² R. Baghdad, Feb. 8 [11], 1963.

¹³ Qassem had promoted himself Lt.-General on Army Day, January 6, 1963.

his face and spent considerable effort on goading Qassem into admitting that the entire planning on the 14th July revolution had been Aref's. He also tried to force Qassem to disclose the name of the person who had divulged the recent plot for January 19. Qassem "was in a state of collapse." He babbled and cried. He denied that he had been an enemy of the people and of Arabism. He had been a friend of the poor, and he had built them thousands of little homes. He asked for a glass of water, which he received. He did not give away his informant.

Then he and his three companions were led away to be court-martialled. He was shown a list with the names of Ṭabaqchālī, Sirrī and their fellow sufferers and was asked whether he had ordered their execution. Thereupon he and his three companions were sentenced to death. Aref, as he later took care to state, was not one of the tribunal¹⁴. Qassem, Maḥdāwī, Aḥmad and Ḥaddād were lined up against a wall and killed by submachine-guns. The time was 1.30 p.m.

* * *

This is the story. There is no reason to doubt that it is true. Surely Aref would not have possessed the imagination to invent that touch of the "thousands of little homes." Nor would Qassem's enemies have lied to make him appear to protect a traitor, when he might have used his secret to bargain for a reprieve.

There remains the question, of purely human interest, whether Qassem had begged for his life. Qassem had not behaved as a coward earlier in his career, but he was highly strung and had been living in a near-dream world. It is possible, and even likely, that the shock of the previous twenty-four hours, together with his physical exhaustion, made him lose his self-respect, and turned him into a whining wreck. But in fairness to his memory it should be recorded that after his death it was rumoured in Baghdad that the official version of his end was false. The truth was that Qassem had asked Aref whether this ending was to be Aref's recognition of the forbearance which Qassem had shown him. Aref stuttered that the matter was out of his hands. Then Qassem, with a last gesture of disdain, turned towards the execution squad.

'Abd al-Karīm Qassem was buried at night in an unmarked grave.

¹⁴ *NYT*, Feb. 15, 1963.

CONCLUSION

What is the place of Qassem's government in the history of Iraq, and in the shaping of the contemporary Middle East? What is the measure of its failure?

The regime had presented itself as the inaugurator of a new era after a total break with the past. It was deemed by those who welcomed it a "liberated" regime, whose birth signified emancipation from "imperialism" and "feudalism." It had from the outset undertaken to speak for a single Iraqi people, composed of varying nationalities and itself an inseparable part of the Arab nation; but no attempt was made to unravel the contradictions involved in these statements.

That the old order was corrupt had been an article of faith with most of the political forces within the country while that order was still of the present. When it was gone, no other evaluation of its position in history was ever offered in Iraq. But the political forces, at one in their execration of the old, held little in common as regards the new. Their dwindling identification with the revolutionary government is a main theme of this work.

As the acclaimed national leader of a republic, Qassem occupied *eo ipso* a position without precedent in Iraqi history. Can it be found that his regime drew from the past to any significant extent in other respects? Qassem was a military man, and his rule was military rule. Should he then be seen as the successor or emulator of the military rulers who had preceded him in Iraq?

Clearly, the shifting cliques of colonels, the "Seven" and the "Three" and the "Four", who pulled the strings between 1937 and 1941 must be ruled out for purposes of comparison. Their position was insufficiently defined, and they remained remote from the public eye.

Gen. Nūr al-Dīn Maḥmūd had been entrusted with emergency powers during the bloody riots of November 1952. He returned his powers after one month, his trust discharged. The line does not pass to Qassem from him.

Bakr Ṣidqī is in a different category. His coup on October 29, 1936, had

been heralded "to the noble People of Iraq" as the action of a "Chief of the National Reform Force" rising against "the conduct of the government whose sole object has been to promote its own personal interests¹." Şidqî cooperated to a varying extent with the political forces on the up-grade—socialism, nationalism. He undoubtedly rated himself as a modernist. Like Qassem, he was widely attacked as being indifferent or hostile to Arab nationalism, although the circumstances were entirely different: Şidqî was a Kurd, and the one recognized merit of the preceding Cabinet of Yâsîn al-Hâşimî was its exuberant support of Arab nationalist causes. A personal connection between Şidqî and Qassem has been mentioned (see above, p. 22), and Qassem treated Şidqî's memory with respect. But the divergences between the rule of Şidqî—if such his nine months of power can be called—and that of Qassem are not merely rooted in differences of national origin or of personality. They are also the product of their times. Şidqî accepted the monarchy. He may not have been swayed by feelings for King Ghazi, but republicanism was not a burning issue in the Arab Middle East of the 1930s, and Şidqî's was not an intellect to sponsor ideological innovations. Thus he never regarded himself as a revolutionary, still less as the leader of a nation. Şidqî never assumed formal responsibility beyond the post he acquired with his accession to power, as Chief of the General Staff. Partly again in accordance with his environment, and partly by inclination, Şidqî showed no interest in social progress. It was his hostility, contemptuous and determined, to social legislation that drove the Ahâlî group, his first political allies, from office. More than twenty years later its surviving leader, Chaderchi, was to translate his experiences with Şidqî into an insurmountable aversion for Qassem as a military dictator.

A significant parallel remains. Qassem's position, like Şidqî's, rested directly on the army. It was no hollow reed. Both were secure enough, or considered secure enough, for their deaths to be announced to the country before their supplanters could take up the reins. It was not found necessary to deal thus with the many other governments toppled by army action in Iraq.

One other possible forebear of Qassem's regime should be examined. This is Rashîd 'Âlî's government of 1941. Qassem himself had recognized a moral debt to Rashîd 'Âlî more than once, before the "Unity now" issue made such acknowledgment inopportune. The assertion of independence, the anglophobia and, deeper down, the intoxicating feeling of delivery which swept the public for those brief weeks in

¹ For the text of Bakr Şidqî's proclamation, see Khadduri, *Independent Iraq*, p. 84.

the spring of 1941, lend colour to the likeness. But again divergences come to the fore. Many important features of Qassem's regime are missing from the 1941 episode: the regard for an Iraqi identity within the Arab world; the diversity of the political forces at work; the social conscience. Had Rashīd 'Ālī lasted longer, the gap might have narrowed. But even the transitoriness of Rashīd 'Ālī's government can be attributed in part to a fundamental difference between the positions of the two men: Rashīd 'Ālī played a minor role in government compared with that assumed by stronger men behind the scenes—the Mufti Ḥājj Amīn, Col. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ṣabbāgh and his comrades of the Golden Square, even his own Minister of Economic Affairs, Yūnis al-Sab'āwī.

The conclusion follows that Qassem's regime owes nothing essential to Iraqi precedent.

* * *

Where did Qassem's Iraq stand in the contemporary Middle East?

Its revolutionary birth set it by the side of Abdel Nasser's UAR. The most serious accusation directed against Qassem on political grounds is that he was *qāsim al-'Irāq*—the divider of Iraq. It is asserted that through his hostility to Abdel Nasser, and to the movement for Arab unity led and personified by Abdel Nasser, he rent Iraq in two and detached her from the mainstream of "liberated" Arabism.

Examined in retrospect the charge seems unjust. It was Qassem's fate to erupt at the head of affairs just when the concept of Arab nationalism was widely understood as merger with Egypt. But no more than a minority of the Iraqi public has ever been ready for such a fulfilment. The traditions and interests of too many and powerful groupings have weighted the scales in favour of independence. Had Qassem insisted on *wahda*, retribution in the shape of strife and chaos throughout Iraq would probably have followed as swiftly, and the results would assuredly have been as bad, as occurred in fact. It is no accident that the charge of divider was levelled against Aref for his advocacy of "unity" in the autumn of 1958 even before Qassem received the title for his negation of that concept.

It is idle to speculate whether Qassem, with his peculiarities, could have maintained the friendly coexistence with Abdel Nasser which his successors achieved in the mid-1960s, a coexistence based on declarations of ideological solidarity coupled with practical respect for mutual independence. Certainly, he would have been only too ready for such a settlement, just as he would have preferred to collaborate with other "liberated" Arab regimes. His consistent wooing of the Algerian nationalists and his im-

mediate recognition of the Yemeni republicans are proof of that. But the stars were against him. Algeria and Yemen were not "liberated" until the second half of 1962. President Bourguiba, in a position vis-à-vis Abdel Nasser resembling Qassem's own, was suspect as an ally of the West. Qassem's alternatives were a rapprochement with King Hussein, Fayṣal's cousin and Nuri's partner, and, after the break-up of the UAR, with Syria, "separatist" and reactionary. Qassem saw no choice. But the end result was the feeling of isolation which oppressed the politically conscious public in Iraq. Harmony with Abdel Nasser remained an objective in keeping with the principles of the 14th July Revolution; harmony with Nāẓim al-Qudṣī and Hussein was a dubious makeshift, at best.

* * *

Within four weeks of the revolution the civilian forces associated with it had begun to fall out with the leadership. Within four years the process was complete. The nationalists had gone underground. The communists were in hostile isolation, the constitutionalists in sulking despair, the Kurds at war. The religious circles had never been better than expectantly neutral, and were soon disappointed. Each had played a significant role in the history of these years. But in the political arena none could hold his own, except on Qassem's terms.

What were the reasons for the bankruptcy? The revolution of July 14, 1958, put an end to more than an unloved dynasty. The coup itself had been executed by a small group of Free Officers; but it was enthusiastically welcomed by practically the whole body politic of Iraq firmly expecting that a new start would be made in almost every field of national endeavour.

Since this body politic was vastly heterogenous, composed of members with widely differing aims although not unevenly matched in strength, a multilateral contest was bound to ensue. The nature and ultimate outcome of this contest were determined by the rigid conception of the new Iraq held by the leader of the coup and ruler of the country. His views of an independent, non-aligned, indivisible, socially progressive, secular state, authoritarian under his rule, took no account of the realities of the Iraqi condition and, in sum, were incompatible with the aims of any one of the political forces which had given the revolution its initial welcome. His opponents could hardly accord with Qassem's belief in his own mission, if not infallibility. Qassem made no serious attempt to form a party of his own from which he might have fashioned an ideological and executive instrument to his needs, bound to him by agreed mutual interest. If Qassem's great gifts as a tactician are added to the balance, the history of his regime seems predetermined.

The almost indecent haste with which Qassem's murderers and heirs received recognition from the community of nations, the general absence of even formal regrets for Qassem's fate, are a striking testimony to his failure².

Three reservations yet deserve to be recorded.

Qassem's feat in staying in power for four-and-a-half years, exerting less obvious coercion and resulting in less bloodshed than the political situation would lead one to expect, has been noted. So has the most plausible explanation for this feat—the care that Qassem exercised to restrain political passions, at the expense of almost all political vitality.

His second success was Qassem's survival in the struggle against Abdel Nasser. No doubt the fact that he had incurred Abdel Nasser's displeasure weighed against Qassem's position. But in the direct contest Abdel Nasser was thwarted; he grudgingly acknowledged his defeat, just as he has since acknowledged defeats against other opponents in the Middle East arena.

It is sad that the last achievement is the most irrelevant. Qassem never lost the faith of the poor. They accepted his solicitude for their fate as genuine, as it undoubtedly was. When drawing up the balance sheet, this item should not be overlooked. It was of no political value.

* * *

Is there a lesson to be drawn from the achievements and failures of Qassem's regime?

There are present in Iraq civilian forces possessed of brains, literacy and organizing experience, and reflecting a meaningful diversity of interest and opinions. However, the men at the head of these forces have not yet developed the ability to coexist, to play the game by recognized rules, to compound their differences for the sake of an agreed higher denominator. In addition, it is doubtful whether a sufficiently large part of the population can be interested in orderly and sustained political activity—distinct from the appeal of rabblousing catchwords. Lastly, and most important, the civilian forces lack the prestige and the forcefulness to induce the army to accept the role of a non-political guardian of public order, in times of disturbance as well as in normal conditions. All these points were again driven home during the rule of the Ba'th Party that followed Qassem's downfall, and of the Bazzāz Cabinet in 1965–6.

It seems, then, that in the foreseeable future the army leadership alone

² The only official expression of human concern for Qassem seems to have come from the Foreign Minister of Tunisia, Mongi Slim.

can ensure for Iraq a modicum of stability and ordered progress, either by direct rule or through influence. This regime, to survive, would have to forego Qassem's constantly reiterated claim that Iraq is a uniform nation capable of following one national leader. It would have to adopt and develop Qassem's general practice of latitude when dealing with the divergences in Iraqi society. It would have to fit the Kurdish problem into this pattern, as Qassem failed to do. Such a regime would naturally also adhere to Positive Neutralism, but in the light of Qassem's experiences it would seem well advised to be satisfied with less baiting of the West than Qassem permitted himself. Finally, it would have to preserve the essential independence of Iraq, as Qassem did, while salvaging the feeling of communion with the Arab world. It would now find this task tremendously eased by sheer good luck: Abdel Nasser at the end of the 1960s is ready to cooperate on limited terms, as Abdel Nasser of the late 1950s never was.

There are signs that the present rulers of Iraq fit into this scheme and have drawn upon at least some of these conclusions. We do not know whether they have consciously benefited from the lesson of Qassem. If they have, it is certain that they are unwilling to acknowledge their debt.

APPENDIX

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE IRAQI COMMUNIST PARTY

The organization of the Iraqi Communist Party during the period under review did not differ fundamentally from that of established communist parties in other countries, with certain modifications and adjustments necessitated by local conditions. However, the ICP was the best-organized political party in Iraq. It is therefore desirable to give some details of its structure¹.

Supreme party authority was vested in the *national congress*. The congress was to determine the party's general policy and rules, and elect the ICP *central committee* which it held to account. The national congress was composed of voting and non-voting members. The voting members were the full and candidate members of the central committee, as well as the delegates for the local and shop party bodies (see below). The non-voting members were coopted at the discretion of the central committee. According to the party constitution the national congress should have been elected by the party cells at lowest level; in fact, the national congress of 1945, the only one to convene so far, was appointed by the party leaders.

The central committee, with a membership varying between twelve and twenty, was supposed to execute the resolutions of the national congress and was generally responsible for details of organization and party activities. It elected its secretary, its secretariat and the political bureau. Due to the underground conditions prevailing in Iraq, the central committee co-opted new members when need arose instead of leaving the task of appointment to the national congress. The central committee convened in enlarged session or in ordinary session. At the former, candidate members of the committee participated without vote. Enlarged sessions were scheduled to be convened every six months at least, and ordinary sessions every two months.

The political bureau conducted the business of the party in the interval between central committee sessions; it was accountable to the central com-

¹ The following is based on *Mawsū'a* (vol. I), *Salām 'Adil, Iraqi Review*, Jan. 25, 1960, and private information.

mittee. The secretary of the central committee, also referred to in ICP publications as the "First Secretary of the Central Committee" or "General Secretary of the Iraqi Communist Party," was an ex-officio member of the political bureau. He came nearest to being the party leader, as Fahd had been in fact.

A body that might take its place between the national congress and the central committee was the *party conference*. It was convened in an advisory capacity by the political bureau and was composed of the central committee (full members and candidates for membership) with other party members coopted by the central committee. No meeting of a party conference took place under Qassem.

The infrastructure of the ICP consisted at the lowest level of *cells* formed on a local or shop basis, the place of dwelling or work. The cells were coordinated by branch committees, and these successively by rural/city, provincial and regional (combining adjoining provinces) committees. These committees enforced discipline down to grass root level and were themselves ultimately accountable to the national bodies enumerated above. Ad hoc committees were also appointed at the appropriate level for specific tasks.

A separate branch (*far'*) existed for the Kurdish area. This was a regional and not an ethnic body. It took its instructions directly from the political bureau.

* * *

The inverse proportion of the standing of the national bodies in theory to their significance in practice is striking. References in communist literature to the "highest party authority" denote the national congress, not the first secretary or the political bureau. This anomaly, not confined to the Iraqi party, can only briefly be summed up here as being due to the progressively unwieldy composition of the superior bodies, to the underground conditions in which many communist parties work², and to the "bureaucratic conceit," pilloried by the Report of the Central Committee of the ICP of mid-July 1959.

² This cause was adduced by an earlier secretary of the ICP, Bāhā al-Dīn Nūrī, in reply to criticism of his alleged anti-collectivist inclinations.

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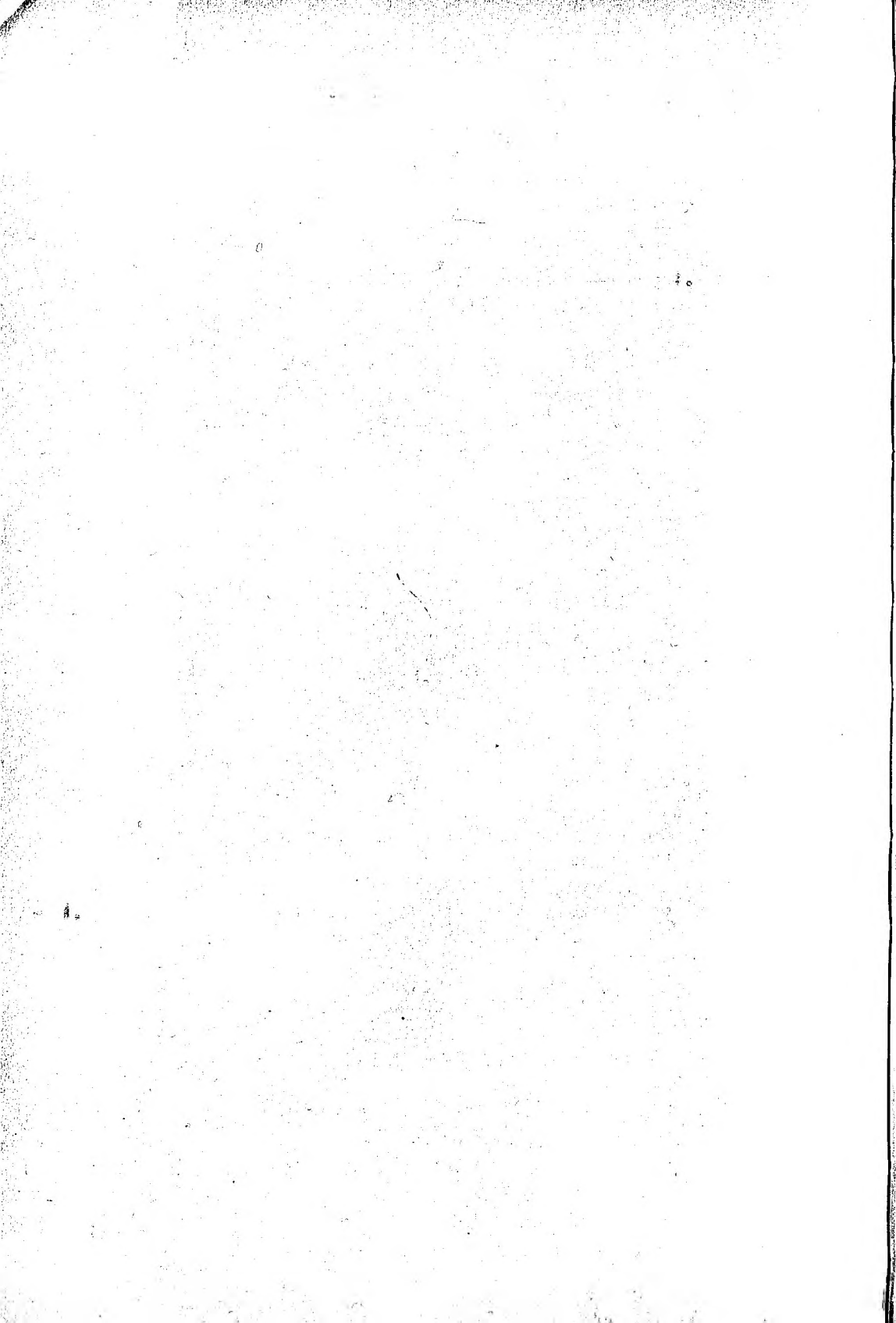
ABBREVIATION OF SOURCES

- ANA - Arab News Agency.
- CC Report - "Report of the Enlarged Session of the Central Committee of the Iraqi Communist Party," *IS*, August 29, 1959.
- Dalīl - Darwīsh, Maḥmūd Fahmī, et al.
- IMB - Itim-Mizrah.
- INA - Iraq News Agency.
- IS - Itihād al-Sha'b.
- IT - The Iraq Times.
- Majzara - Majzarat al-Rihāb.
- MEA - Middle Eastern Affairs.
- MEJ - Middle East Journal.
- MENA - Middle East News Agency.
- MER, 1960—Middle East Record 1960.
- MER, 1961—Middle East Record 1961.
- Mid. Mir. - Mideast Mirror.
- Mizan - Mizan Newsletter.
- NCNA - New China News Agency.
- NYHT - New York Herald Tribune.
- NYT - New York Times.
- NZZ - Neue Zürcher Zeitung.
- Protocols - Maḥkamat al-sha'b.

Qissa - Qiṣṣat al-thawra fī'l 'Irāq wa-Sūriyya.
Revolution, I - Thawrat 14 Tammūz fī 'āmihā al-awwal.
Revolution, II - The Iraqi Revolution in its Second Year.
Revolution, III - The Iraqi Revolution in its Third Year.
Revolution, IV - The Iraqi Revolution in its Fourth Year.
SWB - BBC Summary of World Broadcasts.
WI - al-Waqā'i' al-'Irāqiyya.

WMR - World Marxist Review.

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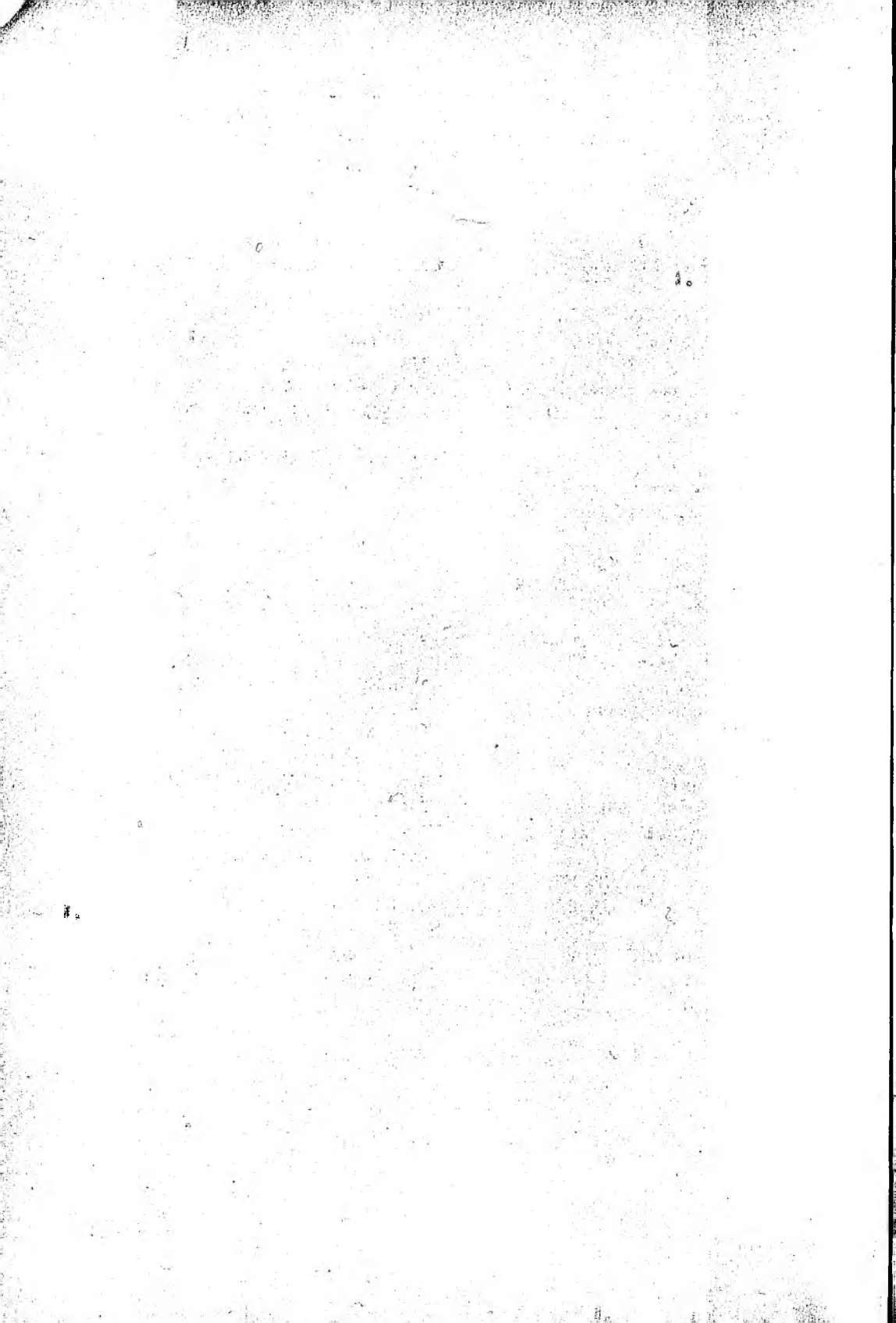
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