



Middle East

INTRODUCTION

IN JULY, 1950, the Arab countries in the Middle East were seething with political and social unrest. During 1949-50, there had been frequent changes of cabinets, armed usurpations of power, attempted coups d'états, assassinations, and impositions of martial law. In the area of foreign affairs, the Arab countries still smarted under the military defeat they had received at the hands of the army of Israel, and peace with Israel was based only on a precarious armistice. Their attitude toward the Western powers was hostile, an attitude that rendered interventions by the Western powers on behalf of suppressed minorities within the Arab countries more difficult.

Arab League

During 1949-50 there were independent Arab monarchies in Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Egypt, and Iraq; independent republics in Syria and the Lebanon; and a semi-independent kingdom in Hashemite Jordan, formerly known as Trans-Jordan. These seven countries constituted the Arab League, and were represented in the General Assembly of the United Nations by five full members, one of whom, Egypt, was a member of the Security Council.

The major problems facing the Arab League when it gathered in Cairo in March, 1950, on the fifth anniversary of its founding, were all directly or indirectly the result of the defeat of the Arab countries by the state of Israel. These problems included the status of Jerusalem, the future of Arab Palestine, the plight of the Arab refugees from Palestine, and the recognition of Israel.

JERUSALEM AND ARAB PALESTINE

The problems of the status of Jerusalem and the future of Arab Palestine were accentuated when, on April 24, 1950, King Abdullah of Jordan officially annexed the Old City of Jerusalem and the areas in Palestine held by the Arab Legion to his kingdom. This act was vigorously denounced by Egypt, the strongest force in the Arab League, on the grounds that it constituted a breach in the united Arab front, and a ratification of the boundaries set by the United Nations Partition Plan of November, 1947, which had been rejected by the League. On April 13, 1950, the council of the League resolved that Jordan's annexation of Arab Palestine was illegal, and at a meeting of the League's political committee on May 15, 1950, Saudi

Arabia, Lebanon, and Syria joined Egypt in demanding Jordan's expulsion from the Arab League.

However, Iraq abstained from voting on this issue, and other Arab leaders attempted to resolve the conflict between Egypt and Jordan. Azam Pasha, Secretary-General of the Arab League, suggested that, in view of the lack of unanimity on this problem within the League, another vote was necessary to determine whether Jordan had violated Arab League policy. No agreement had been reached when the Council of the Arab League met again on June 12, 1950, in Alexandria, nor was any arrived at during those sessions. Thus, the crisis that had threatened the Arab League was postponed, and, with it, the projected plan for collective security among the Arab states.

AFGHANISTAN

THE KINGDOM OF AFGHANISTAN, headed by King Mohammed Zahir Shah, possessed many characteristics of medieval despotism. Afghanistan was regarded as royal property and all lucrative government positions went to members of the royal family. Persons suspected of opposition to the royal family were frequently imprisoned without trial, and the omnipresent police forces kept the people in check. Paralleling and overlapping the political monopoly were the economic monopolies known as *shirkats*, which were owned by the wealthy ruling Mohammed-Zai clan. Another important buttress of royal power were the estimated 20,000 *mullahs* (Moslem divines) who were organized by the government.

Afghanistan's economy depended mainly on the export of karakul skins, dried and fresh fruit, and nuts. During 1949-50 the decrease in the American demand for furs cut heavily into Afghan dollar credits. In addition, because of strained relations with Pakistan, shipping difficulties, and the new Indian duty on Afghan fruits, Afghanistan was having difficulty paying for Indian textiles, sugar, and tea.

Jewish Population

In December, 1949, there were 3,500 Jews residing in Kabul, Herat, and Balkh out of a total population of approximately 12,000,000. According to information submitted to the Jewish Agency, the majority, consisting of 2,211 Jews, resided in Herat. A government decree had expelled Afghan Jews from towns and villages in 1933.

ECONOMIC STATUS

The greater majority of Afghanistan Jews were engaged in the trade of karakul fur and Persian rugs, while the remainder, some of whom were craftsmen, eked out their living from small business and from peddling in the towns and villages. Following the assassination of Nadir Shah in 1933, a number of discriminatory measures were passed against the Jewish population. Jews were forbidden to travel about the country without special per-

mits, and legislation was introduced barring Jews from most of the professions. In addition, Jews were forced out of business after 1933 by the government's new economic policy, which established monopolies in most branches of trade by appointing joint stock companies which were given the rights to certain trades and industries.

Emigration

An announcement made on October 27, 1949, by the Jerusalem Office of the World Jewish Congress to the effect that the Afghanistan government had consented to allow her Jewish nationals to migrate to Israel and that the Indian government had agreed to grant them transit visas, proved premature.

During a brief period in 1935 a few Afghan Jews who possessed limited means had succeeded in reaching Palestine by indirect routes via India, Persia, and Iraq. Although there was a ban clamped on Jewish emigration, approximately one thousand Afghan Jews succeeded in leaving Afghanistan illegally during the period from 1944 to 1950. Bombay, India, became their transit center en route to Israel. The Indian authorities intended to return them to Afghanistan in May, 1950, but Jewish relief organizations, notably the American Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) and the Jewish Agency, came to their rescue and arranged for their transfer to Israel.

There were about 200 families of Afghani Jews in Tel Aviv, Israel, of whom 50 arrived during 1949-50.

EGYPT

ON NOVEMBER 3, 1949, the Egyptian all-party coalition government fell and its premier, Hussein Sirry Pasha, formed a caretaker government of independents without party support. Governing by royal decree, the new cabinet prepared for new elections. A bitterly fought two-month election campaign ensued during which clashes and pre-election riots took place.

On January 3, 1950, Egyptian voters went to the polls, where five parties and one important group of independents contested the 319 seats in the new and enlarged chamber of deputies. The chief parties in the struggle were the National Wafd party and its splinter, the Saadist party. The Saadists, who represented industrial elements, had been in power since 1944, and had ruled with the help of the royal court. The Wafd party won a sweeping victory, gaining an absolute majority of 228 seats, and Mustapha Nahas Pasha, leader of the Wafd party since 1927, formed an all-Wafdist cabinet. Among the ministers appointed to this cabinet was Professor Taha Hussein, Egypt's outstanding writer and one of the most liberal personalities in the Arab Middle East.

The new government faced difficult economic problems caused by the decline in the cotton market and an unfavorable Egyptian balance of trade. There was, in addition, growing dissatisfaction among the Egyptian popu-

lation over the government's failure to carry out promised reconstruction projects, and over the rise in the cost of living, traditionally low in Egypt.

Jewish Population

The Jewish community of Egypt was estimated variously at 50,000, 55,000, and 60,000, out of a total Egyptian population of 19,040,448. Because of the anti-Jewish activity of the government approximately 20,000 Jews had left Egypt during the period between May, 1948, and January, 1950, of whom 7,145 had settled in Israel, according to the Central Bureau of Statistics in Israel. The majority of the emigrants settled in France and Italy; some of the Egyptian Jews took up residence in Switzerland and South American countries. The members of the Jewish community who remained in Egypt were attempting to return to a normal life, though aware that their security depended on economic and political considerations over which they could exert no influence.

Civic and Political Status

As a consequence of the war with Israel, the Egyptian government had during the years 1948 and 1949 considerably abridged the political and economic rights of its Jewish residents. Among the measures taken by the government were the detention in concentration camps of Jewish citizens accused of Zionist sympathies, and the enactment of a series of statutes which came into effect in December, 1947, prohibiting the employment of persons not possessing Egyptian nationality in any commercial undertaking. These statutes had deprived thousands of Jews who, although born in Egypt, retained other nationalities, of their means of livelihood. A number of Jewish professionals were affected; with the abolition of the "mixed courts" where foreigners could try their cases against natives, Jewish lawyers lost an opportunity to practise. Although these laws were directed against all non-Egyptian minorities, the Jews were the group chiefly affected.

EASING OF RESTRICTIONS

During 1949-50 these restrictions were gradually lifted. At the end of July, 1949, fifty prominent Egyptian Jews who had been interned for security reasons following the establishment of the state of Israel in May, 1948, were released and granted permission to emigrate to Israel. Their release culminated twelve months of efforts on the part of the American Jewish Committee, the World Council of Churches, and the International Red Cross.

In January, 1950, it was reported that all Egyptian Jews who had been interned for "pro-Zionist" activities had been released. The Egyptian authorities also returned all Jewish properties placed under government trusteeship after the outbreak of hostilities in Palestine to their owners. On February 5, 1950, the Council of Ministers decided to lift the martial law that had been in force in Egypt since the outbreak of the war. The special office of the Custodian of Sequestered Jewish Property was abolished, and a special government agent was appointed to arrange its liquidation. The Arab News Agency

reported that the funds frozen in Egypt belonging to Jews of various nationalities resident in Israel amounted to £250,000 (\$700,000).

Community Activities and Problems

The activities of the Jewish community in Egypt were restricted to welfare work, emigrant aid, and intervention with the Egyptian authorities to remove the restrictions mentioned above. The most prominent individuals involved in these activities on behalf of the Jewish community were the chief rabbi, Haim Nahum Effendi, and Salvator Bey Cicurel, former president of the Jewish community in Cairo. In an attempt to enable Jews resident in Egypt for many years to acquire citizenship, they petitioned the authorities to alter the naturalization requirements.

Two specific incidents engrossed the leaders of the Jewish community during 1949-50. One was the arrest of twenty-five young Jewish men by the Cairo police, on the charges that they had held clandestine meetings in support of "subversive political movements," and had conducted Zionist and Communist activities. The prisoners were discovered to be a group of youths preparing to emigrate to Israel as halutzim, and there establish a communal settlement.

Another incident was intra-communal in character, and involved a violent struggle between Haim Nahum Effendi and the Lay Council of the Jewish community because of the resignation of Haham Obadia Yusif, the head of the religious court of justice. Haham Obadia Yusif had resigned when certain proposals he had advanced with regard to the observance of the ritual dietary laws in the Jewish hospital were rejected.

Emigration

Despite the gradual amelioration of their civil status and economic situation during 1949-50, the events of 1948-49 had brought many Egyptian Jews to the unhappy realization that Egypt was no longer a safe abode. During 1948-49 government restrictions on emigration, particularly the limitation on the funds emigrants were permitted to remove from Egypt, and the difficulty of obtaining transit visas to Italy and France, prevented more than a mere trickle of Jewish emigrants from leaving Egypt. However, in November, 1949, when these restrictions were eased considerably, hundreds of Egyptian Jews seized the opportunity to emigrate. The emigrants were permitted to take with them no more than £300 (\$864), to be paid in two monthly installments in the first country of their arrival (i.e., Italy or France).

IRAN

A CONGLOMERATE of numerous nations with diverse religions, Iran had a population of 16,500,000 whose official religion was the Mohammedanism of the Shi'a sect (in contrast to the majority of Arab nations who were members of the Sunni sect). An important minority with a strong desire for

political independence was concentrated in the Iranian province of Azerbaijan, a key Middle-Eastern position flanking the Turkish defenses and at the gates of Iraq. Normally the most prosperous region in Iran, this province was suffering from misgovernment, and was a fertile ground for political discontent. A land reform, promised when Azerbaijan returned to Iran following the withdrawal of Soviet forces in 1946, had not yet materialized in July, 1950.

RELATIONS WITH WORLD POWERS

Oil production, Iran's most profitable industry, and second in value only to the Eastern Texas oil fields in the United States, brought Iran into close economic and political ties with Great Britain and the United States. A third world power, Soviet Russia, was constantly and systematically vying for a dominant position in Iran. Soviet propaganda was making the most of the political and social discontent prevailing in Iran, and frequent border clashes were keeping Iran in a permanent state of fear of a Soviet invasion.

RELATIONS WITH ARAB STATES

Iran was on very friendly terms with King Abdullah of Jordan during 1949-50. After an amicable beginning in the early months of 1949, Iran's relations with Iraq became strained. Though Iran had followed the Arab League policy of non-recognition of Israel, on March 15, 1950, Iran accorded *de facto* recognition to the new state, which was followed by an exchange of diplomatic emissaries.

Jewish Population

There were between 90,000 and 100,000 Jews (14,000 to 20,000 families) in Iran in 1949-50. Of this number, 30,000 to 40,000 resided in Teheran, the capital, 15,000 in Shiraz, 10,000 in Isfahan, 3,500 in Kermanshah, 3,000 in Hamadan, and about 2,500 in Meshed; the remainder of the Jewish population was scattered throughout 120 towns and villages.

ECONOMIC STATUS

Iranian Jewry was one of the most miserable and backward communities in the Middle East. Poverty-stricken and illiterate, Iranian Jews were in a grave plight. Only 1 per cent of Iranian Jews could be considered wealthy, 10 per cent belonged to the middle class, and 30 per cent subsisted on a minimum standard hardly comparable to a Western subsistence level. The remainder (more than 50 per cent) eked out a precarious livelihood as small traders, brokers, porters, beggars, and itinerant peddlers.

The majority of the Iranian Jewish community lived in overcrowded ghettos. Amid primitive and unhygienic conditions such diseases as tuberculosis and trachoma spread rapidly and took a heavy toll of the undernourished population, especially of the children.

Civic and Political Status

Formally granted civil rights along with the Moslems in Persia in 1906, Jews were rarely appointed to posts as government officials; concessions, always a prosperous business in Iran, were granted to Jews only in exceptional cases. Few Jews were admitted to the state high schools, and Jewish soldiers rarely received promotions. Because of the opposition of the priests of the Shi'a sect, to which most Iranians belonged, Jews were virtually barred from taking part in public life.

Anti-Semitism

Jews were not persecuted in Iran, except for sporadic outbursts directed against all local minorities. Nevertheless, they were surrounded by a hostile Moslem populace whose antagonism stemmed from a hatred of "infidels."

The Jewish community of Kurdistan, a tribal area in northwestern Iran that extended across the border into Iraq, was caught up in a wave of violence which began in March, 1950, as a by-product of local resentment against the central Iranian authorities. Government officials, though not directly responsible for the outbreak in which twelve Jews were murdered and several Jewish girls raped, were unable to prevent further anti-Jewish incidents and advised Kurdish Jews to leave the area.

As a result, the Jewish community in Kurdistan was in the process of disintegration. By May, 1950, 3,000 Kurdish Jews had fled to Teheran to await transportation to Israel along with the Iraqi Jews en route thither.

Communal Organization

Despite their numbers, the Jews in Iran had few spiritual, social, or political leaders. Rabbis and other religious officials were appointed by local groups; there was no recognized chief rabbi, and every group claimed supreme authority for its own spiritual leader. One of the active leaders in Teheran was Rabbi Isaac Meir Levy, director of Ozar Hatorah. There was a committee of the Jewish community of Iran, of which Dr. Enayatollah Montakhab was elected president in May, 1950, and local communal committees whose activities were very limited. Under the auspices of the American Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), which had appointed a veteran welfare worker to work in Teheran, and the Jewish Agency for Palestine, which maintained experienced administrators at the Israel Office to organize emigration from Iran to Israel, local committees were also established among the Iraqi and Kurdish Jews temporarily residing in Iran.

Jewish Education

Iran had once been a seat of Jewish learning, but because of the lack of teachers few Iranian Jews had any knowledge of Jewish history, religion, or Hebrew. Some Jewish consciousness and contact with the Western world

were effected by the Alliance Israélite Universelle (Alliance), which maintained some twenty schools that provided for the schooling of approximately 7,000 Jewish pupils. The Alliance was chiefly active in the larger cities; the task of Jewish education in the smaller communities was assumed by Ozar Hatorah. Ozar Hatorah maintained twenty-eight schools, with an enrollment of 3,800 students, and also attempted to introduce vocational courses in its special schools for girls.

The majority of the 16,000 to 25,000 Jewish pupils in Iran could not, however, complete their public school education, which was usually interrupted because of the need for them to contribute to the family income.

Emigration

The economic deterioration of the Iranian Jewish community was an important factor in the development of a strong Zionist movement in Iran and the general desire to emigrate to Israel. Premier Mohammad Saed Maraghei declared in Teheran on March 1, 1950, that Iran would place no obstacle in the path of Iranian Jews who wished to emigrate to Israel. However, no trend to a mass exodus was expected, and such emergency situations as that of the Kurdish Jews were given priority by the Jewish Agency office in Teheran.

The desire to emigrate was especially strong among the younger people, and the several hundred Iranian Jews who emigrated to Israel between November, 1949, and July, 1950, belonged for the most part to the halutz (pioneer) movement in Iran. The adult emigrants from Iran had been permitted by the Teheran authorities to transfer their property only in the form of rugs or jewelry.

During 1949-50 Teheran also served as a transit center for Jews who were emigrating from Iraq to Israel. In November, 1949, it was reported that the Teheran government had ordered 1,500 Iraqi Jews who resided in Iran to leave the country in retaliation for measures taken against Iranian subjects in Iraq. The Iranian Ambassador to Washington, Hussein Ala, stated that his government was not acting against Jews as such, but only against Iraqis who in this case also happened to be Jews (all but 30 of the 1,500 persons involved were Jews). After an intervention by Jewish organizations, the Teheran government first agreed (in November, 1949) to postpone their departure for three months, and completely rescinded the order in February, 1950.

IRAQ

THE STATE of emergency accompanied by martial law and tight censorship of the press and post that had been imposed on Iraq throughout the period of the war with Israel was suspended in December, 1949, by the coalition government of Ali Joudat Ayoubi. However, the Palestine issue continued to agitate the government-controlled Iraqi press, which carried rabid anti-Israel and anti-American editorials.

At the same time, a merger of the eight-year old Republic of Syria with the twenty-eight-year old Kingdom of Iraq to form a single Arab state was proposed, and had both popular support and the backing of both Syrian and Iraqi political leaders. However, the Iraqi government failed to secure Egypt's consent to the unification plan, and was forced to resign.

A new Iraqi government was formed under Tewfik as-Suweidi on February 5, 1950. The new Premier was in power no more than a week when he was faced with and put down an attempted coup d'état by Ali Khalid, the chief of police.

Economically, Iraq suffered during 1949-50 from its boycott of the oil refineries in Haifa, Israel, upon which its production of oil depended. The effect was a decrease in Iraqi oil royalties so severe that in March, 1949, the Baghdad daily *Ash-Sha'ab* went so far as to assert that unless the flow of oil was resumed there was no hope that Iraq would survive its financial crisis; Iraq's debt amounted to 15,000,000 dinars (\$42,000,000).

Jewish Population

The Jewish community of Iraq consisted in July, 1950, of approximately 100,000 Jews. Prior to the emigration by airplanes of some 25,000 Iraqi Jews, the Jewish population had been estimated at between 120,000 and 130,000 out of a total Iraqi population of 4,803,430. Of this number, approximately 100,000 lived in Baghdad, where they represented 25 per cent of the total population. The remainder were located in Basra, Mosul, Kirkuk, and other towns. A few thousand Jews were distributed among the villages of Kurdistan, and were engaged in agricultural pursuits.

ECONOMIC STATUS

The Jewish community of Iraq was one of the oldest Jewish communities in the world, and one of the wealthiest. Occupationally the Jewish population was distributed as follows:

Approximately 12,000 breadwinners were shopkeepers and small tradesmen; 8,500 were porters, domestic servants, or engaged in similar trades; 6,000 were office workers; 2,500 were merchants; and 1,000 were professional men such as doctors, pharmacists, lawyers, and engineers.

Civic and Political Status

Even before the establishment of the state of Israel in May, 1948, the Jews of Iraq had been treated as second-class citizens and had suffered indignities of various types. The establishment of Israel gave further impetus to the rise of governmental and popular anti-Jewish feelings. Zionism was declared a crime against the state on a level with Communism, and all Jews were viewed as either Zionists or potential Zionists. Martial law was declared, ostensibly to protect the Jews against popular indignation. Mass arrests and internments, the closing of Jewish-owned businesses and sequestration of Jewish property, the placing of restrictions on freedom of movement, and the denial of exit visas became the daily lot of the Jews of Iraq.

INTERVENTIONS

On October 23, 1949, an Israeli government spokesman in Tel Aviv disclosed that hundreds of Iraqi Jews had been arrested and their property seized in a wave of pogroms. Dates and facts were cited and corroborated that attested to the brutality of this police action on the part of the Iraqi government.

The government of Israel followed up this public disclosure by requesting the government of the United States and Great Britain to intervene with the Iraqi government to halt the persecution of Jews in Iraq. Eliahu Elath, the Israeli ambassador to the United States, met with George C. McGhee, the assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs, on October 24, 1949, to discuss United States intervention. The State Department asked Edmund J. Dorsz, charge d'affaires at the United States Embassy in Baghdad, for an immediate report on anti-Jewish developments in Iraq.

Aubrey S. Eban, permanent representative of Israel at the United Nations, brought the Iraqi affair to the attention of several of the delegations with the view of their intervening in Iraq on the basis of the Declaration of Human Rights.

Mordecai Eliash,¹ late Israel minister to Great Britain, called at the British Foreign Office, and a Foreign Office spokesman disclosed that the British government had made inquiries concerning the reports of anti-Jewish persecutions in Iraq, but had received no replies.

In New York City, the leaders of six major Jewish organizations met on October 25, 1949, in an emergency session, adopted a resolution protesting the persecution of Jews by the government of Iraq, and voted to present a joint memorandum to the United States State Department, calling on the United States government to use its good offices in behalf of the Iraqi Jews. The organizations represented were: the American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress, the American Zionist Council, B'nai B'rith, the Jewish Labor Committee, and the Synagogue Council of America.

On November 3, 1949, after the State Department had declared that it had found no evidence to support charges of widespread anti-Jewish action in Iraq, the representatives of these national Jewish organizations, augmented by a representative from the Jewish War Veterans, called on George C. McGhee, and presented him with an eleven-page memorandum documenting specific acts of persecution.

Protests were also lodged in other countries. In Paris, the Committee of the International Socialist Conference (Comisco) called on the UN to deal with the persecution of Jews in Iraq under articles 55 and 56 of the UN charter. A protest meeting was held in Paris under the auspices of the Fédération Sioniste de France, the Congrès Juif Mondial, and the Fédération des Sociétés Juives de France. In Buenos Aires, leaders of the Delagación de Asociaciones Israelitas Argentinas (DAIA) called upon the Argentine government to intervene. Demonstrations took place in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, and a picket line demonstrated before the office of the Iraqi consulate general in New York City.

¹ See Great Britain, p. 247.

CONFIRMATION OF REPORTS

All the reports of the persecution of Iraqi Jews were denied by Baghdad diplomatic representatives. In Washington, Nathir A. Umari, attaché of the Iraqi embassy, charged that the reports had been disseminated by Israel for "political and fund-raising purposes"; in London, an Iraqi embassy official declared the reports to be "regular Israeli propaganda." Letters in the same vein were sent to *The New York Times* by Abdullah I. Bakr, minister and charge d'affaires of Iraq in Washington, and Ahmed Izzed Mohammed, consul general of Iraq in New York City.

Notwithstanding these denials, the reports were partially confirmed on November 1, 1949, in a statement issued by the United States State Department, on the basis of a report received from the American embassy in Baghdad.

ABATEMENT OF PERSECUTION

Public pressure, the adverse publicity caused by the reports of persecution of Iraqi Jews, and the intervention of the United States government were responsible for an abatement of the persecution. Nevertheless, police actions and a press campaign for the boycott of Jews which linked Zionism with Communism continued.

Communal Activities

The Jewish community in Iraq was the scene during 1949-50 of a violent intra-communal controversy which was finally resolved in December, 1949, with the resignation of Haham Sasson Khadouri from his post of head of the Jewish community of Baghdad. Appointed by the government, it was the duty of the head of the community to preside over the general council, composed of members of the spiritual and lay councils, to administer communal institutions, and to act as chief representative of the community vis-a-vis the government. Though Haham Sasson had a considerable number of supporters within the community and connections in influential non-Jewish quarters, he had become a controversial figure. His frequent anti-Zionist statements and declarations on behalf of the Iraqi Jewish community which were intended to dissipate Arab suspicions regarding the patriotism of the Jews in Iraq had been assailed by various leaders in the community.

During the period of the arrests of Baghdad Jews in October, 1949, cited above, Haham Sasson was asked to intervene with the government. His reaction proved unsatisfactory to the families concerned, and an incident ensued on October 23, 1949, which led to the intervention of the Iraqi police and the arrest of forty Jews on a charge of "threatening peace and security after an assault upon the chief rabbi."

Haham Sasson Khadouri was forced to resign his post, and in January, 1950, Heskail D. Shemtob was elected chairman of the lay council of the Baghdad Jewish community and acting head of the community.

Social Services

During 1949-50 the Jewish community of Iraq was forced to face relief problems with which it could not always cope. The number of unemployed and indigent cases in Baghdad reached the peak of approximately 12,000 due to the influx of provincial Jews into the capital. The two largest welfare organizations, the Committee for Schools and Hospitals and the Committee for Child Care, found their activities considerably curtailed, due to a large financial deficit. As a consequence, the Jewish schools, at which 5,000 pupils were enrolled, were severely affected.

Emigration

On March 3, 1950, the Iraqi Chamber of Deputies approved an emergency bill permitting Jews to leave the country, on the condition that they renounce their citizenship. The bill also provided that Jews who had left the country previously without permission were to be given two months' time in which to return or lose their citizenship. The bill was to be valid for one year, but could be abrogated within that period by royal decree. Saleh Jabr, minister of the interior and vice-premier, who had prepared the bill, was of the opinion that it was in the national interests of Iraq to allow the emigration of those Jews who refuse to remain in Iraq, and that free emigration would put an end to the anarchy caused by the illegal movement of Jews to Iran. At the time of the passage of the bill in the Chamber of Deputies it was reported that the government also intended to restore to those Jews who chose to remain in Iraq their status as equal citizens which had been abrogated during the war with Israel. On March 6, 1950, the bill was also ratified by the Senate, against a strong opposition offered by the former premier Saleh bey Jabr. He maintained that the bill did not make it clear whether the Jews leaving would be permitted to withdraw their properties and funds from Iraq, and that on principle the government should first consult member states of the Arab League on the question of emigration of Jews from Arab countries.

Opposition to the bill was also voiced by the only Jewish member of the Senate, Ezra Menahem Daniel, who stated that Iraqi Jews were emigrating from Iraq precisely because of the government prohibition. Daniel urged that the government accord equal rights to Jews who refused to emigrate, and that the discriminatory restrictions imposed during the period of martial law be abolished. (One of the most restrictive measures compelled Jews wishing to travel abroad to leave a deposit of £2,000 [\$5,600] with the Iraqi authorities.)

Former premier Pachachi also declared that Iraq should study the question of exchanging its Jews for the Arabs of Israel or for the Palestine Arab refugees. He thus revived a similar suggestion made earlier by Nuri Said Pasha, who had been the Iraqi premier when the wave of persecutions started in May, 1948. Moshe Sharett, Israeli foreign minister, disclosed that the United Nations Economic Survey Group, headed by Gordon Clapp,

had conveyed to Israel an Iraqi suggestion for an exchange of all Iraqi Jews and some of their property for Palestine Arab refugees. No action was taken on the suggestion.

EMIGRATION STATISTICS

The number of Jews who took advantage of the opportunity to emigrate from Iraq to Israel and registered with the special government offices set up in Baghdad and Basra were variously reported at 40,000, 50,000, and 90,000. In June, 1950, a trustworthy report from Baghdad estimated the number to be well over 25,000. After they had registered, the names of prospective immigrants were forwarded to the council of ministers for official approval—a procedure which normally took more than two months. This and other routine delays partly accounted for the fact that during the period from March to June, 1950, only slightly more than 1,000 Iraqi Jews had been allowed to emigrate to Israel. The remainder of the applicants, having already sold their possessions at extremely low prices, were still awaiting their turn in the unfavorable atmosphere of an Arab boycott.

Those allowed to leave the country were permitted to take a check on the Ottoman Bank for fifty Iraqi dinars (\$140); for persons under twenty years of age the allowance was only thirty dinars (\$76). Each adult was also allowed to take 67 pounds of luggage per person; the ratio per family was 400 pounds. Before departure the emigrants were searched thoroughly and all gold and jewelry found on them was confiscated. Thus, they arrived in Israel with very meager means.

EMIGRATION ROUTES

The large-scale immigration projected by the Jewish Agency in November, 1949, was being held up because of the many difficulties which the Iraqi government continued to put in the way. Since Iraq was still technically at war with Israel, it barred the use of any direct emigration route. The Jewish Agency and the American Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) therefore decided that Iraqi Jews would have to be flown to Israel, and approached the British Middle Eastern authorities for help. After considerable negotiations with the Iraqi government, an air route was eventually worked out for the transportation of Iraqi Jewish emigrants to Israel via Baghdad, Nicosia, and Lydda which was described as "Operation Ali Baba." Another route much less frequented ran from Baghdad and Basra to Teheran, Iran, and thence to Israel.

LEBANON

THE GOVERNMENT of Lebanon was compelled, because of the country's proximity to its stronger northern neighbor, Syria, to follow the line agreed upon by the Arab League, despite the large minority of Christians in Lebanon. In March, 1950, Lebanon became engaged in a trade conflict with Syria arising out of the dissolution of their economic union, and relations between the two countries were more strained in July, 1950, than they

had been at any time since they became independent of France. Since Lebanon was dependent to a great extent on the import of goods that streamed into Beirut and thence were distributed throughout the Middle East, the action of Syria in barring her market to Lebanese imports constituted a serious blow to the Lebanese economy.

Jewish Population

There were approximately 6,000 Jews in Lebanon in 1949-50. Chiefly immigrants from the cities of Damascus and Aleppo in Syria, the majority of the Jews resided in Beirut, smaller numbers dwelling in Tripoli in northern Lebanon and Sidon in southern Lebanon. On the whole, Lebanon Jewry constituted a prosperous community, whose members were chiefly engaged in commerce and the professions.

Anti-Jewish Acts

Lebanon Jewry considered itself well treated by the government on the whole, despite the imprisonment of some forty Lebanese Jews in a concentration camp during the war with Israel.

However, during 1949-50 an instance of popular violence took place which is worthy of note. In February, 1950, dynamite exploded in the cellar of the school of the Alliance Israélite Universelle (Alliance) in Beirut, which had been founded in 1900. Military experts who investigated the incident reported it as a wanton act. Among the persons killed in the explosion was Mme. Penso, director of the school.

Community Organization and Activities

The Jewish community of Lebanon was well organized and was permitted a wide autonomy under the Lebanese constitution, which recognized membership in religious communities. The elections to the presidency of the Jewish community were supervised by the authorities, and the president represented the community before the government. The Jewish community was legally entitled to issue such documents dealing with Jewish personal life as birth and death certificates and marriage licenses.

All communal activities were concentrated in the Beth Abraham synagogue in Beirut, where the Talmud Torah, Alliance school, B'nai B'rith lodge, and Maccabi sport club were housed. The rabbinate was restricted to the performance of its religious functions.

Emigration

The ties of the Lebanese Jewish community with Israel were loose, and there was no emigration to Israel. There was only a small halutz (pioneer) movement of Zionist youth.

In March, 1950, the Lebanese government allowed foreign Jews residing in Lebanon to cross over into Israel, taking their belongings with them.

This decision enabled several hundred Jews who had fled to Lebanon from Syria and Iraq during the persecutions of the Jews in those countries as a result of the war with Israel to enter Israel under the supervision of the Lebanese-Israeli Armistice Commission. At the same time Israel agreed to accept Christian refugees from Palestine who were residing in Lebanon. Prior to March, 1950, Syrian Jews who crossed the border into Lebanon had been detained by the police or compelled to pay large sums of money to Lebanese bands engaged in smuggling immigrants into Israel.

SYRIA

AFTER a year of political unrest whose roots lay in economic poverty, the young Arab republic of Syria, third largest among the Arab states, with a population of 3,400,000, was still struggling in vain to keep its house in order.

On August 15, 1949, General Husni Zayim, chief of staff of the Syrian army, who in March, 1949, had ousted Premier Khalid el-Azem by a coup d'état, was executed and a civilian cabinet took office. The real power behind the new government was Brigadier General Sami Hinnawi, commander of the Syrian army. On November 15, 1949, a new National Assembly was elected which was dominated by parties opposing the proposed merger of Syria and Iraq. On December 19, 1949, General Hinnawi and several of his associates were arrested by a group of army officers. Former Premier Khalid el-Azem was installed as the head of the Syrian provisional cabinet. This was the third coup d'état during 1949. On December 24, 1949, Nazim el-Kudsi, former foreign minister, formed a new government, which in turn fell on January 5. On March 14, 1950, Syria proclaimed its economic separation from Lebanon and ordered the establishment of customs barriers between the two countries. Thus, the seven-year old customs union ended. On March 24, 1950, the National Assembly held its final session; new elections were to be held on May 14, 1950. On May 8, 1950, Premier Khalid el-Azem's cabinet resigned, but remained in office pending official announcement of the action. On May 29, 1950, the Syrian cabinet led by Prime Minister Khalid el-Azem formally submitted its resignation. On June 4, 1950, Nazim el-Kudsi, deputy leader of the People's party, formed a new transitional cabinet.

Behind this unbroken chain of social unrest curbed by the rule of military cliques lay a number of deep-seated political and economic factors. Syria was still politically immature; it had achieved independence only in 1942, and while freeing itself from French rule had not inherited the ability and effectiveness of French administration. Despite a facade of constitutional democracy, Syria was still ruled by personalities and cliques, not by political parties in the Western sense. The Syrian government was beset by economic misery; the problem facing the young state was that the national income was so meager as to raise the question of Syria's viability as an independent state.

Jewish Population and Communal Affairs

During 1949-50 the number of Jews in Syria was further reduced and in July, 1950, the Jewish population of Syria was approximately 8,000, unevenly divided between Damascus (4,000-4,500) and Aleppo (2,500-3,000), with the remainder residing in Homs and Hama.

Families with substantial means had left Damascus for Beirut, Israel, Egypt, and the United States; only representatives of the lower and middle-class Jewish population still resided in the Jewish quarter of Damascus.

On the whole, the Damascus community, headed by Sabri Laniado, was impoverished, and approximately 2,500 individuals, or more than 50 per cent of the community, were in need of the relief furnished by American and Beirut Jewry. The Allepan Jewish community under the guidance of Chief Rabbi Moshe Taweel was languishing in similar straits.

Anti-Jewish Acts

Like Iraq, Syria was the scene of intense anti-Semitism during 1949-50. Numerous arrests, confiscations of property, and a vicious anti-Jewish press attack culminated in the bombing on August 6, 1949, of the synagogue in the Jewish quarter of Damascus.

The explosion occurred at the time when Syria was conducting armistice talks with Israel at Lausanne, Switzerland, and the Syrian government, then under the leadership of Field Marshall Husni Zayim, blamed a group of terrorists for the murderous attack. Fearful lest the bombing disrupt its negotiations with Israel, which lodged a vigorous protest with the UN Conciliation Commission, the government of Syria determined to deal with the matter speedily. Six suspects were arrested, and Husni Zayim declared that a seventeen-year-old Syrian ex-serviceman of the Palestine campaign had confessed to perpetrating the explosion with the aid of two accomplices.

The American Jewish Committee intervened with the government of Syria and B'nai B'rith intervened with the United States government to punish both the perpetrators and instigators of the bombing. It is not known whether those arrested were ever brought to trial in the political confusion in Syria after Husni Zayim was murdered.

Jewish Education

Of the 1,200 children of school age in Damascus, 500 were provided with an education in the school of the Alliance Israélite Universelle (Alliance), maintained in part by the community; 500 were in attendance at the Talmud Torah; 150 were enrolled at the school of the English mission, and 50 at various other schools.

In Aleppo the two schools of the Alliance were closed during 1949-50, and only 500 children were being educated in the Talmud Torah.

Emigration

Living under such circumstances of terror and poverty, many Syrian Jews tried to emigrate to Israel. However, Syrian police were on guard along the Lebanese border and frequent arrests of Jews attempting to emigrate illegally were made known. Nevertheless, during the first week of November, 1949, the Damascus daily *Al-Ayam* reported that nearly 300 Jewish families had left Syria for Israel during the three-month period from August to November, 1949, and had succeeded in taking along their belongings and money. At the end of December, 1949, Syrian police headquarters announced that they had arrested 200 Syrian Jews and seized nine motor-boats after discovering a "Levantine-Jewish band smuggling Syrian and Lebanese Jews into Israel." The same week, the Amman (Jordan) daily *A-Nahda* published details of an organization with branches in Damascus and Beirut that was allegedly engaged in smuggling Jewish residents of the Levantine states into Israel.

News from Beirut to the effect that the Syrian authorities had decided to follow the example of the Iraqi government and allow Jews to emigrate on condition that they renounce their nationality had not been substantiated by July, 1950.

YEMEN

YEMEN, the weakest member of the Arab League, was also commonly regarded as the most backward of the Arab states. The Egyptian government had offered to send missions to educate the Yemenites and modernize their country, but these offers had been emphatically rejected.

Since the assassination of Imam Yehia, Yemen had been suffering from the effects of a battle among the members of the royal family over the succession to the throne. Imam Ahmed, the king, was preoccupied in July, 1950, in fighting his brothers, Prince Ismail, whom he had arrested, and Prince Seif-al-Islam Hassan, governor of the capital of San'a. Another brother, Prince Ibrahim, the only member of the royal family with a formal education in the Western sense of the term, had been put to death by Ahmed on the charge of having attempted to introduce an alien ideology into Yemen, where the stringent laws of the Koran were the law of the land.

Unlike King Ibn Saud of Saudi Arabia, Yemen's wealthy northern neighbor, the king of Yemen had for a long time steadfastly refused to allow British and American oil experts to enter Yemen, even for consultation. However, Yemen at last announced a new "open door" policy toward foreign petroleum interests during 1949-50 (*The New York Times*, November 23, 1949).

Jewish Population

The number of Jews remaining in Yemen after the mass emigration to Israel during 1949-50 (*see below*) was estimated at approximately 3,000 in

March, 1950. The largest Jewish communities were almost completely liquidated. Only the following communities remained: San'a (1,000 Jews), Damar, Yarim, Sada, and environs in Southern Yemen; Shaban, Kawkaban, Amran, and environs in Northern Yemen; and Hiyamah, Tihamah, and environs in Northeastern Yemen. The movement from Hamdan, Sharif, and Najran in Central Yemen was proceeding slowly, and some Jews were still left in Al-dala'a, Katbah, and Lahaj.

Almost all of the rabbis and spiritual leaders among the Yemenite Jews had left for Israel, notable among them being Chief Rabbi Amram Korah, Rabbi Shalom Korah, and Rabbi Radjo Sarum.

Emigration

With the arrival in Israel of 37,795 Jews from Yemen during the period from December, 1949, to March, 1950, by airlift via Aden in a gigantic operation appropriately named "Operation Magic Carpet," one of the ancient Jewish communities in the world was liquidated. This mass migration was financed by the United Jewish Appeal of the United States (UJA), and carried out by the American Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) with the notable assistance of the Jewish Agency and the Histadrut in Israel, at a total cost of \$17,500,000. This amount included transportation costs and expenditures for the initial rehabilitation of the new immigrants in Israel.

Complicated financial arrangements were necessary to persuade the Imam to release his Jewish subjects. Jewish organizations sought the intervention of the British and United States governments and frequently approached the Yemen delegation to the United Nations. Permission was granted to Yemenite Jews to emigrate with the stipulation that all immovable property be confiscated by the state. They were, however, allowed to bring with them the tools of their trades along with their Torah scrolls, vestments, and religious books, most of which were handwritten and some extremely precious.

When the emigrants arrived at Aden, a British protectorate port, the average weight of their personal belongings was found to be less than twelve pounds. Most of their money, gold and silver, jewelry, and other belongings had been stolen from them by armed gangs and by villagers in Yemen.

A large number of the Yemenites arrived in Israel in a poor state of health. Although they were generally among the younger element of the Jewish population of Yemen, they were suffering from malaria, malnutrition, and trachoma, and many had to be hospitalized.

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