Middle East

Introduction

The chain reaction which the Korean war touched off in 1950-51 affected in varying degrees the major political problems of the Middle East. The growing fear, particularly after Communist China's intervention, that the Korean fighting might develop into a third world war made the Western powers increasingly sensitive to their weak position in this strategic region. The United States and Great Britain stepped up their efforts to bring the Middle East into their global defense arrangements, or at least to insulate the area against Soviet penetration. The United States inclined toward the extension of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to embrace the Middle East (or as much of it as possible); the United Kingdom tended to favor the formation of a separate Allied Middle East Defense Organization. Both efforts, at the end of the year under review, were singularly unfruitful.

Attitude Toward the West

Of all the Middle East countries only Turkey—the recipient of military and economic aid from the United States since 1947—was openly and fully identified with the West. While basically oriented toward the West, Israel nevertheless persisted in its policy of "non-identification," chiefly in the interest of the Jews still residing in the USSR and Eastern Europe. In Iran, where anti-British feeling reached new heights following the adoption of the oil nationalization law at the end of April, 1951, the United States was linked with England by an articulate segment of the public. The Arab states remained ambivalent. None in the final analysis was pro-Soviet. But neither were they pro-West. The United States, because of its allegedly pro-Israel policies, continued to serve as the whipping boy of xenophobic nationalists in all Arab countries. In Egypt the ground swell of nationalist grievance against Britain over the terms of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936 ran so strong as to rule out any prospects of close co-operation between that land and the West. In no other Arab state was anti-British sentiment so intense. Egypt still carried the strongest weight in Arab councils, if for no other reason than its wealth and size of population (about half of all the Arabs of the Middle East resided on the banks of the Nile).
Arab League

The fifth session of the United Nations General Assembly on November 1, 1950 adopted, at the request of the Arab states, a resolution inviting "the Secretary General of the League of Arab States to attend sessions of the General Assembly as an observer." On the other hand, two candidates endorsed by the Arab states—Lebanon for the Security Council seat to be vacated in January, 1951 by Egypt, and Pakistan's Sir Muhammed Zafrullah Khan for President of the General Assembly—were defeated by Turkey and Iran's Nasrollah Entezam. Moreover, the General Assembly could reach no decision on the question of Jerusalem, though the Arab states continued to urge its internationalization. The Arab delegates displayed their petulance by abstaining from voting for extension of Trygve Lie's term as Secretary General of the United Nations, on the ground that he had not been "entirely impartial" on the Palestine question.

Mutual Defense Pact

Within the Arab League itself the collective security pact (originally approved in April, 1950, with Iraq and Jordan abstaining), though amended in February, 1951 at the request of Iraq to provide for a military staff committee, was not signed by Jordan or Yemen, and in any case required ratification by the signatory states. This pact was transparently aimed at Israel, as was the Arab League's courtship, toward the end of the period under review, of non-Arab Iran and Turkey in the hope of establishing the solidarity of the Moslem Middle East. Some progress toward this end was achieved in Iran, owing to the oil crisis and the political resurgence of the Moslem clerics. But Turkey remained aloof to Arab overtures.

The Former Mufti

The former Mufti of Jerusalem, al-Hajj Amin al-Husayni, continued to engage in intrigues. As a result of the Arab defeat in the war in Palestine, al-Hajj Amin lost political status, as he had done several times before in his long career. But he was able to thrust himself onto the political scene from time to time through the Arab Higher Committee—the quondam political directorate of the Palestine Arabs—which he kept alive by organizing groups of Palestine Arab refugees for agitation against Israel and against Jordan's King 'Abdallah. During February 9-13, 1951 the former Mufti participated in a world Islamic conference in Karachi and obtained its approval of the Palestine Moslem cause. But he did not come into the political limelight until after King 'Abdallah was assassinated in Jerusalem on July 20, 1951 and the Husayni link to the crime was proved.

Arab-Israel Relations

Arab-Israel relations gave little cause for cheer in 1950-51. The United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine, which had failed since its in-
ception in January, 1949 even to induce the Arab delegations to treat directly with the Israel negotiators, remained as ineffective as ever. The Arab-Israel armistice system was beginning to show signs of strain, as attested by the fact that on three occasions (October 16–November 17, 1950, April 17–May 18, and July 26–September 1, 1951) issues which normally would have been handled by the mixed armistice commissions were reviewed by the Security Council. The most serious were the Hulah crisis in April–May, 1951, and Israel’s complaints against Egyptian blockade practices at the Suez Canal in July–August, 1951. The latter was merely one move in the Arab campaign to effect the economic isolation of Israel. Other moves included the Arab League’s decision in February, 1951 to tighten the economic boycott against Israel, and Iraq’s sequestration, after March, 1951, of the property of Jews who had registered for emigration to Israel and its pressing these Jews to leave immediately.

"Ingathering of the Exiles"

Israel’s slogan—kibbutz ha-galuyot, or the “ingathering of the exiles”—had particular relevance to the Middle East in 1950–51. The airborne immigration of Jews from Yemen was virtually completed in September, 1950. The Iraqi airlift, more than double the size of that of Yemen (and Aden) and executed in little more than half the time, was almost completed by the end of June, 1951. And now the government of Israel, the Jewish Agency for Palestine, the American United Jewish Appeal, and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee began to turn their attention to the plight of the Jews in Iran (and Afghanistan). The exodus from Syria, though steady, continued at a much slower pace. The tempo of emigration from Egypt and Turkey slackened markedly, after the Jewish population in each of the two countries had been reduced to somewhat less than 50,000.

ADEN—COLONY AND PROTECTORATES

GREAT BRITAIN acquired the Crown Colony of Aden—which includes the Port of Aden and adjacent Shaykh ‘Uthman, near-by Perim Island, and the Kuria Muria Islands (more than a thousand miles to the east)—between 1839 and 1882 by conquest, purchase, and cession. The colony encompasses altogether an area of only 110 square miles, with a population of 80,615 at the time of the 1946 census. Administrative responsibility, which had been exercised in India, was transferred to the Colonial Office in 1937, when the territory was finally converted into a Crown Colony. By the close of World War I Britain had progressively extended its control inland toward Yemen and along the southern littoral of the Arabian Peninsula to the confines of the shaykhdom of Masqat and ‘Uman. This much larger territory of some 112,000 square miles, with an estimated population of 650,000, is broken up into a large number of tribal districts. With the shaykhs of each of the districts the United Kingdom entered into special treaty relations on the basis of which
the tribal chiefs retained autonomous powers over internal affairs, but surrendered all responsibility for foreign relations to England in return for British protection. Since the close of World War I the territory had gradually been consolidated into two main subdivisions: the Western Protectorate and the Eastern Protectorate (or the Hadhramawt), each under a supreme shaykh who supervises domestic affairs, and a British Political Agent who reports to the Governor of Aden Colony. London's primary interest in the colony and the protectorate was strategic, for Britain maintained a naval and air base at the port of Aden and several R.A.F. bases in the protectorates.

The hinterland of the protectorates remained largely terra incognita, even to the protecting power. No comprehensive geological or cadastral survey had yet been made. Population statistics were no more than crude estimates. As was common in those sections of the Middle East populated by nomadic or semi-nomadic tribes, fixed boundaries had still to be delineated.

**Jewish Population**

At the time of the British occupation of the harbor of Aden in 1839 there may have been a handful of Jews in the area. In succeeding decades, as British rule became more firmly entrenched, the community expanded, in the main as a result of immigration from Yemen, although a number of Egyptian Jews also settled there. The Aden Jews thus constituted, in the final analysis, an off-shoot of the much larger Jewish community of Yemen. The first synagogue was established in Aden in 1858. Not until eighty years later, however, was the local Jewish community council formed, under the presidency of Bentob Messa. The Messa family, perhaps the wealthiest in the community, provided a commodious synagogue and a new school building in the town of Aden, while another school was maintained in Shaykh 'Uthman.

The Jews permanently residing in the colony and the protectorates on the eve of the birth of Israel probably did not exceed 6,000, or about 0.8 per cent of the estimated total population. By and large they were concentrated in the city of Aden and Shaykh 'Uthman, where they lived in their own separate quarters and engaged principally in shopkeeping. Far different was the life of the 1,500 or so Jews scattered among the villages of the Western Protectorate and among the tribes of the Hadhramawt. The Protectorate Jews, like those of Yemen, were chiefly craftsmen. Indeed, the craft of silversmith was widely regarded as an exclusively Jewish occupation.

Typical of the condition of the Jews in the villages was the situation which Colonel D. van der Meulen—a Dutch explorer and one of the few Westerners other than British officials and soldiers to visit the hinterland—found in 1939 in Lawdar, located some ninety miles northeast of the port of Aden. The village, observed van der Meulen in *Aden to the Hadhramaut*, "had some stonebuilt houses, two mosques and a Jews' quarter. Most of the dwellings were made of dry branches of bushes tied together. The Jews, of whom there were thirteen families, all lived together, narrowly hemmed in by the Arabs. Their houses were the same as Arab houses except perhaps that they were a little cleaner inside. . . The women we found here were not given the rough
outdoor tasks in the fields and with the cattle that are allotted to their Arab sisters. They were dressed and had their hair made up in exactly the same way as the Arab women and even their faces were also painted yellow. The men and the boys were at once everywhere distinguishable from Arabs by the ringlets they wore in front of their ears, by the skull-caps they wore instead of turbans or head-clothes, and by the absence of belts to their long gowns.”

Emigration

The position of the Jews of Aden began to deteriorate in the late 1930’s, as a result of the spreading interest in the Palestine Arab cause throughout the countries of the Arab Middle East, an interest fostered at that time by German and Italian propaganda. But the only anti-Jewish outbreaks of that period, which occurred in December, 1938 in Aden Colony, were anemic by comparison with the riots visited upon the same community precisely nine years later—immediately after the UN General Assembly’s adoption of the partition resolution—when 80 Jews were killed, a like number wounded, and most of the Jewish shops, many of the homes, and the few public buildings were burned and their contents looted.

The Jews of Aden, who had previously trickled into Palestine, soon began to think of organized emigration to Israel. The fact that the port of Aden served as the assembly center for Israel-bound emigration from Yemen and the point of origin for “Operation Magic Carpet,” enabled the Jews in the colony and the protectorates to take advantage of the same facilities. As late as March, 1950 there were still as many as 4,000 Jews in the colony; by the end of June, 1951 their number had been reduced to less than 2,000. The exodus from the protectorates was probably not relatively as large. Nevertheless, Jews were emigrating from the hinterland, as evidenced by the fact that the last two flights of “Operation Magic Carpet” in September, 1950 brought 164 Jews from remote and isolated Habban, the largest Jewish community in the Hadhramaut.

AFGHANISTAN

The landlocked Moslem kingdom of Afghanistan, hemmed in by the USSR, Iran, and Pakistan and touching China and the disputed district of Kashmir, covers an area of approximately 253,000 square miles, with a population estimated in 1947 at 12,000,000. In theory, Afghanistan was a limited monarchy, governed under a constitution promulgated in October, 1931 by King Nadir Shah, father of the present ruler, Muhammad Zahir Shah, and founder of the dynasty. In practice, the king’s power was absolute, for the bicameral legislature, comprising the monarch’s personal appointees or individuals selected because of unquestioned loyalty to the throne, was no more than a consultative body; the Loe Jirga, or Great Assembly, consisting of representatives from all the tribes and districts, was convoked by the king at his pleasure—that is, only in times of extreme crisis. The cabinet was in reality
the king's privy council, composed of members of his family and immediate entourage. The primary function of the army was to preserve law and order, which in Afghanistan meant keeping the tribes under control.

The economy of Afghanistan is basically agricultural. The land is farmed—in the abstract expression of the United Nations—"under an undiversified, non-intensive system of cultivation." Since the close of World War II the government has entrusted a modest agricultural development program (assisted in 1949 by a $21,000,000 credit from the Export Import Bank) to an American engineering firm. The few existing factories were built by the present dynasty and are operated as government monopolies. Similarly, much of the foreign commerce has been handled directly by state-controlled companies.

In the nineteenth century Afghanistan lay in the path of Russian and British expansion in central Asia, but passed into the British sphere of influence by 1880, when the ruling amir, in return for an annual subsidy, surrendered to the United Kingdom responsibility for his foreign relations. At the time of World War I, with the abandonment by England of its forward policy in central Asia, the subsidies were discontinued and Afghanistan resumed control over its own foreign affairs. In an effort to avoid entanglements with either the USSR or Britain, Afghanistan turned primarily to Germany in the 1930's for technical advisors. Afghanistan became a member of the League of Nations in 1934, and after following a policy of strict neutrality in World War II was admitted to membership in the United Nations in 1946. While the situation in Afghanistan, as a neighbor of the Soviet Union, has aroused some concern in Washington in the past four years, this inaccessible central Asian land has been affected by the East-West cold war only in a peripheral manner.

The most serious international problem arose from incidents along the Pakistani frontier, an inheritance from the days of British rule in India. Relations with Pakistan continued hostile in 1950–51. Consequently, Afghanistan's major exit to the sea for trade with the west (chiefly with the United States) remained shut.

Jewish Population

The Jewish community in Afghanistan was essentially an impoverished and neglected extension of that in Iran. Indeed, most Afghani Jews spoke Persian and were dependent upon the Iranian community for teachers and textbooks. As in all Moslem lands, the Jewish community in Afghanistan enjoyed religious and cultural autonomy. The head of the community was its spokesman before the government and was responsible for the payment of taxes and enforcement of the law.

A century ago, it is believed, there may have been as many as 40,000 Jews in Afghanistan, scattered among some 60 towns and villages. Since then the Jewish population has dwindled steadily, particularly after 1870, when, in the wake of the government's imposition of taxes and other repressive measures against the Jews of Herat, thousands crossed the border into Iran.
ANTI-JEWISH POLICY

But this was mild in comparison with the decrees specifically directed against the reported 12-15,000 Jews in the mid-1930's, largely under the influence of some 150 German technicians—many confirmed Nazis—employed by the government. Jews were expelled from the rural areas and confined to Kabul, Herat, and Balkh. They were required to obtain special permits for travel within the country, and were prohibited from sending letters abroad. Jews were also excluded from the civil service and most of the professions; and though subject to compulsory military service, they were not issued arms or uniforms but were assigned menial, noncombatant duties. The institution of government-controlled monopolies automatically eliminated from foreign commerce all but that handful of Jews which was able to enter into partnership with Moslems. As a result of this anti-Jewish policy, the number of Jews in Afghanistan was reduced through illicit emigration to some 5,000 by the close of World War II.

Emigration

The anti-Jewish tradition received fresh impetus after 1947, when Afghanistan aligned itself with the Arabs in the Arab-Israel conflict. About 1,000 Afghani Jews reached Bombay in the early postwar years, prior to the partition of India. Most of them were eventually brought to Israel via Aden by “Operation Magic Carpet” in 1949–50. Owing to the hostility of Pakistan, small groups of Afghani Jews, turning westward, escaped to Iran. Finally, in October, 1950 the Afghan government began to issue passports and exit visas to Jews. By December some 600 gathered in Iran—one-third in Tehran and the remainder in Mashhad—awaiting transportation to Israel. About 1,000 others were reported at that time to have obtained authorization to leave Afghanistan. While some of the Afghans in Tehran were flown to Israel, as part of the program for evacuating all Jewish refugees in Iran, the number of Afghanis in the Iranian capital swelled to 560 by June, 1951. With the completion of the Iraqi airlift in the summer of 1951, the Jewish Agency was expected to give high priority to organizing the Israel-bound emigration of Afghanis who succeeded in reaching Iran.

EGYPT

The general election of January, 1950 returned the Wafd party to power holding more than 70 per cent of the seats in the Chamber of Deputies. The Wafd, however, was represented by a minority in the Senate, where the opposition parties were able to hamstring the legislative efforts of the new government of Mustafa Pasha al-Nahhas. This situation was rectified by the king, who is invested under the constitution with the right to appoint two-fifths of the members of the upper chamber. King Faruq exercised the royal prerogative by replacing with Wafd stalwarts seventeen opposition senators
in June, 1950, and thirty-six more in May, 1951. The opposition parties, when in power themselves, had condoned this practice. But now they protested vehemently and threatened to boycott the legislature. The protest and the threat made Nahhas and the Wafdists sensitive to the criticism certain to be hurled at them, if the government took any action on international issues that could be construed by extreme nationalists as not in accord with Egypt's national aspirations.

The principal issue of this kind in 1950–51 was the controversy over the twenty-year Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936, which gave England preferential rights in Egypt (primarily use of military bases), and maintained the existing regime in the Sudan (an Anglo-Egyptian condominium in name, but a British protectorate in fact). Negotiations for revision of the treaty, which had broken down in 1947, were resumed in June, 1950. Egypt insisted on the immediate and complete evacuation of British troops and the unity of the Nile under the Egyptian crown, by which was meant Egypt's absorption of the Sudan. While prepared to withdraw its troops from the Canal Zone, the United Kingdom, particularly after the outbreak of the Korean war, was determined to secure its right of re-entry in the event of either the threat or outbreak of a new general war; it also insisted that provision be made for joint defense planning in peacetime. The Suez Canal, so vital to Middle East defense, argued the British, could not be safeguarded by Egypt alone. In the case of the Sudan, England sought assurances that the wishes of the Sudanese would be consulted in any determination of that country's fate. At the end of June, 1951 there was little hope that Egypt and Britain would reach an agreement.

In Egypt almost every international problem was examined in the light of its real or fancied bearing on Anglo-Egyptian relations. Hostility to England accounted not only for Egypt's refusal to co-operate in any Western scheme for Middle East defense within or outside the framework of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, but also for Egypt's neutrality in the Korean war. The same hostility went far to explain Egypt's increasing emphasis on expanding its armed forces, as attested by a 1951 military budget of $172,000,000, and the cabinet's consideration in the spring of 1951 of a five-year military program (including the establishment of a munitions industry) to cost $1,148,000,000—all this to refute Britain's argument about Egypt's inability to defend the Suez Canal.

Even Egypt's closing of the Canal to all ships going to and from Israel was drawn into the Anglo-Egyptian controversy. Britain, as the maritime power with the paramount interest in the Canal, protested against this interference with shipping. Egyptian nationalists persuaded themselves that this was further "evidence" of Israel's having been brought into being by Britain and serving as Britain's Middle East protégé. On the other hand, the blockade was also one more manifestation of Egypt's unabating hostility to Israel; another was Egypt's sponsorship of the Arab League's repeated appeals in 1950–51 for tightening the economic boycott against the new state.

Domestically, the Wafd government began to nibble at the edges of Egypt's massive social and economic problem. Legislation was enacted providing old-age and total disability pensions, with a basic annual stipend of $33.60, for
every Egyptian without other means of subsistence. A second law promised free primary and secondary education to all Egyptian children seeking it. Other reforms required landowners to provide sanitary housing and fresh water for fallahin in their employ, and certain classes of factories to compensate workers for industrial accidents and diseases. Two new government departments were established, one to supervise a ten-year housing program for urban workers, and the other concerned with the reformation of child delinquents. To help defray the costs of these social reforms, the Wafd government, against the determined opposition of the landed interests, doubled the land tax in February, 1951, making the increase retroactive to January, 1949.

Jewish Population

In May, 1948 the Jewish population was estimated to be about 80,000, or 0.4 per cent of a total Egyptian population of 19,087,304 (provisional estimate of 1947 census), being exceeded among the non-Moslem minorities only by the million and more Coptic Christians. Some 43,000 Jews resided in Cairo, 31,000 in Alexandria, and the remainder in the larger towns of the Delta and Canal Zone, such as Tanta, Mansurah, Damanhur, Port Sa‘id and Suez. By June, 1951 the Jewish population was believed to have dwindled through emigration to some 48,000-50,000, or 0.26 per cent of the total. The Jews of Cairo were reduced in number to about 25,000, those of Alexandria to approximately 20,000, and those in other urban centers to some 3,500. Following the Jewish exodus from Iraq, the Jewish community of Egypt was for the time being (June, 1951) a shade larger than that of Turkey, and among the Jewish communities in the Middle East Moslem states, second in size only to that of Iran.

ECONOMIC POSITION

The Egyptian Jews had become integrated into the economic life of the country long before World War II and were proportionately well represented in trade, manufacturing, banking, and the professions. A few Jewish families, such as the Cattaui (Qattawi) and Cicurel, had amassed substantial fortunes. The majority of Egyptian Jews were moderately wealthy; somewhat more than 10 per cent could be classed as poor, even according to Egyptian standards.

Egyptian Jews of the two upper classes were hardest hit by the Company Law of July 29, 1947, which stipulated that three-fourths of the clerical and white-collar employees and nine-tenths of all manual laborers in Egyptian firms (whether Egyptian-owned or not) had to be Egyptian citizens. All Jews suffered severely from the repressive decrees of the government and mob excesses during the Arab-Israel war. The consequent damage to the economic status of the Jews was repaired only in part by the progressive repeal of the emergency decrees in 1949–50. The effects of the Company Law, however, were more enduring, as most of the clerical and white-collar workers became virtually unemployable and constituted the largest group of emigrants.
Civic and Political Status

Under the capitulatory regime, the last formal traces of which finally vanished with the abolition of the Mixed Courts in 1949, foreign citizenship carried many advantages. Like members of the local Greek and Italian communities, a large percentage of the Jews—estimated as high as 30,000 and including many of Egyptian birth—acquired and retained citizenship of such European countries as France, England, and Italy; a smaller number retained their original Turkish nationality. An additional 40,000 Jews—called "local subjects" in Egypt—were technically stateless, despite the fact that most of them were of Egyptian descent, for they were neither citizens of Egypt nor of any other country. Many of this class had sought naturalization under the nationality law of 1929, but their applications were not acted upon, owing to "administrative obstruction" largely growing out of the antipathy of Moslem officials. Only about 10,000 or 12.5 per cent, of the Jews were actually citizens of the country.

The Jews of Egypt enjoyed greater civic and political liberties than their coreligionists in the other Moslem states of the Middle East in the quarter-century following the end of World War I. There was a Jewish Quarter in Old Cairo, but the majority of Jews lived elsewhere in the city, many in the fashionable Heliopolis district. Jewish representation in the legislature was not guaranteed under the Egyptian constitution as it was under the Iraqi; yet Egyptian Jews were returned steadily to the Senate as well as to the Chamber of Deputies. There were Zionist branches in Egypt from the earliest years of the World Zionist Organization. These survived World War II, even though Zionism had already been outlawed in all the states of the Arab East; Egypt became the seat of the Arab unity movement; and local Arab newspapers and nationalist societies repeatedly leveled charges of treason against Egyptian Zionists.

The three forces to which the Jews became increasingly exposed from the mid-1930's on—anti-Zionism, anti-foreignism (because of the large number of Jews enjoying capitulatory privileges), and the tendency of the Moslem majority to discriminate against all non-Moslem minorities—crystallized into a specifically anti-Jewish movement in the period of the Arab-Israel war. The local Zionist branches were driven underground. Jews were subjected to social and political abuse. The government, adopting the practice of the other Arab states, required all persons who sought transit or tourist visas to Egypt to declare their religion. Although all political rights were restored and Aslan Bey Cattaui continued to serve as senator and his brother René Bey as deputy, the old feeling of political security had not yet returned in 1950-51 to the Jews remaining in Egypt.
Community Organization

The Egyptian Jews were divided into three groups: Sephardim, Ashkenazim, and Karaites, in order of size. In Cairo each of the groups maintained a separate community organization. The largest, however, was the Sephardic community, whose spiritual leader, Haim Nahum Effendi, was recognized as the chief rabbi of Egypt. In Alexandria all three were represented by a single community council. The Jewries of Cairo and Alexandria maintained between them more than a dozen schools; the Sephardic community of Cairo also supported a Jewish hospital. Moreover, community councils existed in Tanta, Mansurah, Port Sa'id and Damanhur, where virtually all Jews were Sephardim, so that the question of separate organization did not arise. The Alliance Israélite Universelle operated its only school in Egypt at Tanta.

The events of 1948–49, followed by the wave of emigration, naturally weakened the several community organizations, especially that of the Ashkenazic community of Cairo.

Emigration

Between May, 1948 and October, 1950 an estimated 27,000 Jews emigrated from Egypt. By June, 1951 perhaps another 5,000 had left the country. Of this total 14,422, or almost one-half, had settled in Israel by December 31, 1950. A substantial proportion took up permanent residence in France and Italy, which would suggest that they were Egyptian Jews claiming citizenship of these countries from the days of the capitulations. The remainder emigrated chiefly to Latin America. Finally, Egypt's refusal to allow Jews bound for Israel to pass through the Suez Canal added considerably to the cost of financing the exodus from Iraq, Iran, and Afghanistan.

IRAN

The period under review was one of growing political and economic crisis in Iran. At the core of the crisis lay the domestic problem of social and economic reform, and the international problem of relations with the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC). The end of the period saw the attention of Iranians and the world focused almost exclusively on the oil issue.

The widely hailed Seven-Year Plan, designed to introduce urgent economic and social reforms at a cost of $650,000,000, was virtually abandoned on January 1, 1951, when the Iranian government terminated its contract with Overseas Consultants, Incorporated (OCI). This private consortium of American engineers had drawn up the original comprehensive blue-print of reforms in 1949, and was then engaged by the Iranian government in an advisory capacity in connection with the execution of the Plan. Even if OCI and the Iranian Government had not fallen out over project priorities and
method of implementation, the Plan would have encountered insurmountable difficulties, for Iran did not have the necessary funds. Two crop failures had already placed a serious strain on the country's economy; Iran's application for a loan of $250,000,000 from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development was not approved; and increased oil royalties were held up by the failure of the Majlis (lower house of the legislature) to ratify the supplementary agreement with the AIOC.

The Oil Issue

This agreement, which provided for a 50 per cent increase in payments to the government, was signed by the British-owned company and the Iranian Finance Minister on July 17, 1949. The Majlis refused to ratify it on the ground that the proposed schedule of payments was inadequate. The deadlock played into the hands of the xenophobes and religious reactionaries. The two deputies who led the fight against ratification were Muhammad Mosaddeq and Sayyid Ayatollah Abu-al-Qasim Kashani. Mosaddeq, leader of a half-dozen deputies calling themselves the National Front, had fought equally bitterly against ratification of the oil concession which the USSR had sought in Iran during 1944-47. Kashani, a religious leader returned from exile in June, 1950, saw in the crusade for oil nationalization an opportunity to promote Pan-Islam, and (more important) to restore the political influence of Moslem clerics in Iran, who had been suppressed by Reza Shah.

The announcement by the Arabian-American Oil Company (Aramco) in January, 1951 of its new agreement with Saudi Arabia (whereby the company and the government were to share the profits equally), contributed to the developing crisis in Iran. The first major casualty of the agitation in Iran was Prime Minister 'Ali Razmara, who was assassinated on March 7, 1951 because of his efforts to have the 1949 supplementary agreement ratified. On April 29 Mosaddeq was named prime minister, and on May 2 the Shah promulgated the law passed by both houses of the legislature calling for the nationalization of Iran's oil resources and the cancellation of the AIOC concession (not due to expire until 1993). Negotiations between Iran and the oil company under the new law broke down on June 19, and Tehran refused to recognize the competence of the International Court of Justice to which Britain next referred the dispute. Nor was W. Averell Harriman, President Truman's special adviser serving as mediator in the dispute, any more successful in his efforts between July 15 and August 22 to effect a settlement.

Meanwhile, as one of the by-products of the oil dispute, Iran ordered the closing of its consulate in the Israel section of Jerusalem on July 7. This move, reportedly taken at Kashani’s insistence, was intended to win the support of the Arab states, whom Iran had alienated by according Israel de facto recognition on March 15, 1950, and perhaps to retaliate against Israel because of its desire to have the AIOC refinery at Haifa restored to full operation.
Jewish Population

The number of Iranian Jews in July, 1950 approximated 100,000, or between 0.5 and 0.6 per cent of a total population variously estimated at between fifteen and eighteen million. By June, 1951 the Jewish population had declined through emigration to some 80,000–90,000, but among the non-Moslems in Iran the Jews still ranked second in size only to the Armenian community of 120,000. The largest Jewish centers were those in Tehran (35–40,000), Shiraz (15,000) and Isfahan and Hamadan (5,000 each). As recently as 1948, perhaps as many as 25 per cent of the Jews lived in the smaller towns and villages. Everywhere they occupied separate quarters, consisting for the most part of crowded clusters of dismal, disease-ridden hovels, although a few Tehranis in recent years had begun to reside in other sections of the capital. Since the birth of Israel internal migration from the rural areas to Tehran, as the first step along the road to Israel, had broken up a number of the smaller Jewish communities. The most rapid movement of this sort was from the Kurdish districts along the northern Iraqi border, where as a result of anti-Jewish outbreaks in March, 1950 the Jewish population dwindled in a year’s time from an estimated 15,000 to about 4,000–5,000.

Economic Position

The economic position of the vast majority of Iranian Jews bordered on destitution. Only a handful (in Tehran and Mashhad) could be classed as wealthy, and those employed as white-collar workers or in the professions (mainly in Tehran) constituted a relatively small group. Almost no Jews were engaged in crafts. The most common calling was that of peddler and small shopkeeper. The plight of the Iranian Jews appears to have grown even worse in 1950–51, as a result of the severe economic crisis through which the land was passing. In the rural districts, where Jewish hawkers and shopkeepers were dependent on loans from Moslem merchants and usurers, the Jewish exodus from the villages caused the Moslems increasingly to refuse Jewish clients credit for fear they might leave before repaying their debts.

Civic and Political Status

Although Shi‘ah Islam is the state religion, all Iranians enjoyed formal guarantees of equality under the constitution of 1906. The Jewish, Armenian, and Parsi (Zoroastrian) communities were each represented by one deputy in the lower house of the legislature. Jews as such were traditionally not persecuted in Iran, although like other non-Moslem minorities they encountered social antagonism on the part of the Moslem majority, especially in the rural areas. Only a very few Jews were admitted to government service. With the rise of xenophobia, which Kashani and other religious leaders encouraged as part of the campaign for the nationalization of the oil industry, there were indications that Iran’s Jews might be among those singled
out for persecution as foreigners. As of the time of writing (July, 1951), there had been no interference with JDC work in behalf of Jews.

Community Organization

Owing to the general poverty and widespread illiteracy (perhaps as high as 75 per cent), community organization among the Iranian Jews was inchoate. A central committee was supposed to represent the interests of the Jews before the government. But in practice a multiplicity of uncoordinated local committees in Tehran and the provinces competed with one another in that function. Religious life among the Jews, as among their Moslem neighbors, was shot through with superstition.

Social Services

Only the most rudimentary social services for the underfed, ill-clad and unemployed members of the community existed until 1949, when the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) assumed responsibility for administering relief. In the past two years the JDC endeavored, with some success, to train Iranian personnel, to broaden the civic consciousness in the local communities, and to get the competing committees to co-operate.

Jewish Education

From the beginning of the century the Alliance Israélite Universelle operated schools in Iran for the Jewish community. In January, 1951 the Alliance was subsidizing 21 elementary schools attended by 6,875 children plus 7 other institutions, including a kindergarten, a Talmud Torah, and a vocational school, involving 712 children in all. One of the few effective committees organized by Iranian Jews was the Ozar ha-Torah, dedicated to the promotion of religious education and the study of Hebrew, which was organized at the instance of the Ozar Hatorah leaders in the United States, Israel and Iran, with the support of the JDC. Ozar ha-Torah directed some 30 elementary schools throughout the country, with a total enrollment in January, 1951 of 4,500. The JDC, devoting about one-third of its budget in Iran to education, supported both the Alliance and the Ozar ha-Torah, and in 1950-51 was instrumental in getting the two groups to collaborate.

In the summer of 1950, and again a year later, the JDC sponsored a seminar in Tehran for teachers from both school systems, as a means of raising educational standards. In 1950-51, ORT opened in Tehran and Isfahan vocational training schools for instruction in building and carpentry.

One of the first surveys undertaken by the JDC showed that 60 per cent of the children in the Tehran Jewish community—the wealthiest in the country—were undernourished. The JDC acted to remedy this situation, and by April, 1951 some 2,000 children were being fed one meal daily, and 3,000
children were being issued clothes semiannually. The JDC also tried to improve sanitation facilities in the schools and to furnish essential medical care.

**Emigration**

Between May, 1948 and June, 1951 about 18,000 Iranian Jews settled in Israel; of these about 12,000 or close to 64 per cent arrived in the year 1950–51. Ever since the Jewish Agency opened an office in Tehran in 1943 (with a view at that time to establishing contact with Jews in the USSR, as well as aiding Jewish refugees arriving from Eastern Europe via Russia), there had been a small but growing *halutz* movement. All attempts, however, to employ the principle of selective immigration by favoring those with *hakhsharah halutzit* were frustrated in Iran as elsewhere by emergency conditions. Thus, the majority of Iranian Jewish emigrants to Israel in the past year were refugees from the Kurdish districts.

Refugees from Iranian Kurdistan, like those from Iraq and Afghanistan, assembled for the most part in Tehran, whence emigration to Israel was organized. The Kurdish Jews, in their first panicky flight in the spring of 1950, squatted in the Jewish cemetery of the Iranian capital. Here the JDC in May, 1950 began to provide essential relief, and shortly thereafter the Jewish Agency set up a clinic and temporary infirmary, staffed with medical personnel from Israel. In March, 1951 the Kurdish camp was closed, its 1,000 inmates being transferred to the Iraqi camp in the same city. Through the latter camp had passed some 12,000 Iraqi Jews, or slightly less than 12 per cent of the total Iraqi exodus to Israel in 1950–51. By June, 1951, about 2,000 refugees (including 1,200–1,300 Iraqis and Kurds) were located in this camp, for which the Jewish Agency assumed responsibility at the beginning of the year. An equal number was scattered throughout Tehran. These included mostly Jews from the Iranian provinces (among them some 500 who had established themselves in various synagogues for a period longer than nine months, as well as approximately 500 more recent arrivals from the hinterland of Bushire in the Persian Gulf area), and about 420 Afghans (out of a total of 560 in Tehran), who squatted in the rear of the closed Kurdish camp.

When the Jewish exodus from Iraq had spent itself, in the summer of 1951, the Jewish Agency announced that emigration from Iran (and from Afghanistan, for which Iran was the only outlet) would be given high priority.

**IRAQ**

On September 16, 1950 General Nuri Pasha al-Sa'id, in one of the frequent cabinet reshufflings, became prime minister for the eleventh time in his long career. In an address before his Constitutional Union party on November 28 Nuri Pasha denounced the Anglo-Iraqi treaty of 1930 as obsolete; he elaborated upon the same theme before Parliament on December 27. But
these speeches seemed intended for home consumption, as the government made no move to reopen negotiations with Britain, or to follow Egypt's example in threatening unilateral abrogation of the treaty which was not to expire until 1957.

Iraq was more successful than neighboring Iran both in securing a loan from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and in reaching a settlement with the Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC) for an upward revision of royalty payments. On June 15, 1950 Iraq signed agreements with the International Bank for a $12,800,000 loan for financing a Tigris River flood-control project. This formed part of a larger five-year program for rebuilding the Tigris-Euphrates irrigation system. For this purpose a national development board was set up on October 10, 1950, and the oil revenue was set aside by law to defray the costs. Negotiations with the IPC had been in process over as long a period as Iran's negotiations with the AIOC, with no immediate results. After the Iranian oil dispute came to a head, there was some agitation in Iraq to nationalize its oil industry. But finally on August 13, 1951 it was announced in Baghdad that an agreement, similar to Aramco's agreement with Saudi Arabia, had been signed with the company, subject to parliamentary approval.

Iraq, which with Jordan refused to sign the Arab League's collective security pact in April, 1950, finally reversed its position on February 2, 1951, when its amendment providing for a chief-of-staff committee was accepted. The amended pact, however, still awaited at the end of June, 1951, the signatures of Jordan and Yemen and ratification by all the signatory states.

The large-scale Jewish emigration from Iraq in 1950-51 had an immediate unsettling effect on the country's economy.

**Jewish Population**

On the eve of Israel's birth the Jewish population of Iraq was variously estimated at between 110-150,000. Even in July, 1951, when the vast majority had already abandoned this ancient Jewish community—the oldest in the world, outside of the Palestine area, with a history going back some 2,500 years—exact statistics were still unavailable. The most reliable figure would appear to have been in the neighborhood of 135,000, or 2.8 per cent of a total of 4,799,500 (1947 census estimate). Some two-thirds, and possibly more, of the Iraqi Jews, or in excess of 90,000, lived in Baghdad; the rest were concentrated in Bashrah and Mosul, or were distributed over the rural areas, especially of Iraqi Kurdistan. The Jews of Iraq constituted the largest non-Moslem community in the land, and formed some 25 per cent of Baghdad's total population. Indeed, until 1951 the Jewish community of Baghdad ranked first in size in the Moslem Middle East.

When the Iraqi airlift to Israel commenced on May 19, 1950, some 8-10,000 Iraqi Jews had already escaped to Iran on their way to Israel. The number of Jews remaining in Iraq at that time had thus been reduced to 125-127,000. By June 30, 1951, emigration caused the Jewish population to decline to 22-25,000, most of whom lived in Baghdad. Despite its attenua-
tion, the Jewish community of Baghdad still vied with that of Cairo for third place after those of Istanbul and Tehran in the Moslem Middle East. But at the year’s end, when the airlift still had another month to run, it was expected to carry away another 6,000 or more Jews, so that the Baghdad community was on the point of falling behind Cairo and, possibly, Alexandria.

ECONOMIC POSITION

Prior to the exodus, Iraqi Jews formed far and away the wealthiest Jewish community in the Moslem Middle East. The wealth for the most part derived from their commanding role in Iraq’s foreign trade, for Jewish merchants dominated the import and export markets. Moreover, in the 1920’s Iraqi Jews, owing to their relatively superior education and linguistic knowledge, obtained many of the best white-collar positions in Moslem and foreign firms, as well as in the government civil service, while the number engaged in the professions was comparatively high. The Jews of Iraqi Kurdistan, the least affluent group, were employed in commerce, the various crafts, and even in agriculture.

But the Jewish economy in the past two decades became the target of a dual assault. Following Iraq’s attainment of independence in 1932, local nationalists stressed the Islamization of the country’s economy; and after 1936, when they began to champion the Palestine Arab cause, nationalists also came to identify Iraqi Jews with Zionism. In the commercial field the result of these two pressures was the mixing of the Jewish and Moslem business spheres; Moslem merchants sought Jews as partners for their mercantile experience, and Jews sought Moslem collaborators for the added security. On the clerical and professional levels, while many Jews were able to maintain themselves precariously in their positions, employment opportunities for younger Jews progressively diminished.

The severe repression of the Iraqi Jews, and their forced contributions to nationalist societies and the government exchequer during the Palestine war, struck fear into the hearts of all classes. When martial law was lifted in 1949, many wealthy Jews took advantage of loosely drawn legislation and lax controls to send substantial amounts of capital abroad. A few merchants followed their capital across the Iraqi borders. But the majority of Jews who fled to Iran without official authorization were simply unemployed or unemployable, as a result of cumulative disabilities and the general economic crisis in Iraq (caused in part by the government’s interference with Jewish economic activities).

On March 9, 1950 the Iraqi legislature passed a supplement to the law governing annulment of Iraqi citizenship. All Jews who had already left or attempted to leave the country illegally, or who chose thereafter voluntarily to emigrate, were automatically to lose their citizenship. Each legally departing adult, furthermore, was not permitted to take with him more than ID 50 (an Iraqi dinar is equivalent to £1 sterling, or $2.80 at the present rate of exchange). One of the government’s principal motives in enacting these measures was to encourage Jewish emigration, while preventing the flow of Jewish capital from the country and “legalizing” its seizure by Moslems.
This became apparent after the expiry of the denaturalization supplement on March 8, 1951. At that time less than half of the 103,866 Jews registered for emigration had actually left the country. On March 10 the Iraqi legislature enacted a new bill, entitled “Law for the Control and Management of the Assets of Denaturalized Iraqi Jews,” which froze all movable and immovable properties of registered Jews; the law stipulated that the expenses incurred by the office established to supervise the frozen properties (General Trusteeship Department) should be defrayed from these assets. These provisions were extended, by a new law adopted on March 22, to the properties of all Jews who had left Iraq legally after January 1, 1948, unless they returned within two months after publication of a notice in the press of the capital of the country where they happened to be residing. At the same time the government issued a decree prescribing the procedures for the “direction, disposal and sale” of the sequestrated properties.

In the end the government even froze the property of those Jews who had not registered for emigration, but were merely partners of Jews who had forfeited their citizenship. Safeguards against injustice were lacking, since there was no provision for appeal to the courts, and the decision of the Minister of the Interior was final. The net effect of the enactments was to render possible the swift transfer of substantial fortunes from Jewish to Moslem hands.

INTERVENTIONS

The government of Israel took immediate retaliatory steps against Iraq’s discriminatory legislation. Foreign Secretary Moshe Sharett declared in the Knesset on March 19, 1951 that “the value of Jewish property frozen in Iraq will be taken into account with regard to the compensation we have undertaken to pay the Arabs who abandoned property in Israel.” Sharett went on to state that notice to this effect would be given to the appropriate United Nations agencies. On March 20 the Foreign Minister presented an aide-mémoire on his government’s position to United States Ambassador Monnett B. Davis and British Minister Sir Alexander Knox Helm. A formal statement for transmittal to the Arab states was given to the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine.

The American Jewish Committee on May 8 protested to the United States Department of State against the Iraqi enactment of March 22, which it characterized as “clearly a racist law, conforming to the spirit and letter of the Nazi Nuremberg laws. As such, it violates the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the U.N. General Assembly in December, 1948, and even the Constitution of Iraq itself.”

On May 18 the Agudat Israel World Organization, the Consultative Council of Jewish Organizations, the Co-ordinating Board of Jewish Organizations, the World Jewish Congress, and the World Union for Progressive Judaism jointly submitted to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in Geneva a similar protest against the entire body of Iraqi legislation.
Civic and Political Status

Under the Iraqi constitution and electoral law the Jewish community was entitled to four deputies in the lower chamber of the legislature (two for the Baghdad district and one each for the Basrah and Mosul districts). Local politicians began as early as June, 1950 to request a reduction in the Jewish representation. Although this step may confidently be expected, no such action was taken as of June 30, 1951. Ezra Daniel continued to serve in the upper chamber in his appointive post as the only Jewish senator.

Community Organization

The religious, legal, and cultural autonomy of the Iraqi Jews was guaranteed by a royal decree issued on May 26, 1931 with the legislature's approval. The law provided for separate community councils, with religious and lay leaders, in Baghdad, Basrah, and Mosul, each responsible to the Ministry of Justice. The Baghdad community, by reason of its wealth and numbers, was the best organized, maintaining its own network of schools, charitable institutions, and hospitals. As late as 1950 the Alliance subsidized some ten schools in Iraq. With the dissolution of the smaller communities and the drastic reduction in size of the Baghdad community, many of these activities were sharply curtailed. The Baghdad community was preoccupied in 1950–51 with administering relief to dispossessed Jews awaiting transportation to Israel, and submitting representations to the government against the effects of the discriminatory legislation. As of June 30, 1951 the government had not revoked or amended the decree of 1931 concerning the Jewish communities.

Emigration

The airborne emigration of Jews direct from Iraq to Israel—the largest operation of its kind ever undertaken—formally got under way on May 19, 1950. At the insistence of the Iraqi government the planes at first had to make an 800-mile detour on the round trip between Baghdad and Lydda by alighting at Nicosia (Cyprus), both going and coming. Then in February, 1951 Iraq demanded the Nicosia stop only on the return trip to Iraq. Finally, commencing on March 12, direct flights to and from Israel were authorized.

Since no outside Jewish agencies were allowed to assist the emigrants in Iraq, no camps or other installations were set up. Prospective emigrants merely collected at designated synagogues in Baghdad—and in Basrah after April, 1951—where the traffic was organized and priorities were established.

The airlift got off to a slow start. Altogether, 26,131 Iraqi Jews were brought to Israel between May 19 and December 31, 1950, or an average of somewhat more than 3,500 per month. But as the number of registrants
reached unexpected proportions and the government of Iraq instituted its economic pressures, the program was accelerated. Thus, in the first six months of 1951 the number of Iraqi immigrants reaching Israel was 80,476, or a monthly average of more than 13,400.

"Operation Ali Baba," which was not quite completed as of the end of June 1951, was expected to cost between $4,000,000 and $5,000,000, a sum provided by the United Jewish Appeal of the United States.

LEBANON

Lebanon and Syria devoted a substantial part of the period under review to resolving the problems arising from the abrupt termination in March, 1950 of their customs union. The two governments were able by May 13, 1951 to formulate tentative principles for a new economic accord, but at the end of June a formal agreement still awaited drafting.

Riyad al-Sulh resigned as prime minister on February 13, 1951, being succeeded by a caretaker government under Husayn ‘Awni which prepared for the quadrennial general election fixed for April 15. The election campaign proved turbulent: 19 persons were killed and more than 50 injured. But in sharp contrast with the widespread fraudulence and intimidation which had marked the 1947 balloting, most observers—foreign as well as local—applauded "the relatively honest” 1951 election, which returned 45 new deputies (out of a total of 77) to the unicameral legislature.

Having escaped assassins’ bullets in Bayrut on March 9, 1951, Sulh was finally slain in ‘Amman (Jordan) on July 16. Responsible for the murder was the quasi-fascist Syrian Nationalist Socialist Party ("Socialist" having only recently been added to its name), which sought revenge for the execution on July 8, 1949 of its leader, Anton Sa’dah, after an abortive attempt at a coup d'état.

Jewish Population

The Jewish population in Lebanon, numbering roughly 6,000, constituted about 0.5 per cent of a total population of about 1,270,000 (including the Palestine Arab refugees) and represented the smallest religious community in the country. More than 5,000 Jews were concentrated in Bayrut, the Lebanese capital; the remainder were divided among Sidon, Tripoli, and ‘Alayh. In Bayrut the Jews were not confined to any special quarter.

Economic Status

The Lebanese Jews were engaged primarily in commerce and the professions; a few were employed in the civil service. The best economic and commercial weekly in the Middle East (outside of Israel) was edited and published in Bayrut by a Jew, Tawfiq Mizrahi.
Civic and Political Status

The few Lebanese Jews had never been represented in the legislature. Yet the local Jewish community enjoyed greater security than any of the Jewish communities in the near-by Arab states; this was owing to the fragmentation of the Lebanese population into numerous religious sects, none of which constituted a majority; to the slight numerical preponderance of Christians over Moslems; and to the confessional basis of Lebanese politics (going back to the Ottoman regulations of 1861 and 1864). Indeed, Jewish civil servants, whose employment was temporarily suspended during the Palestine war, continued to receive their salaries. On the other hand, because of Lebanon’s proximity to Palestine and the presence of many Palestine Arab politicians, nationalistic agitation against Zionism had been a constant phenomenon on the local scene since 1936. No untoward incidents, however, were reported in 1950–51.

Community Organization

The Jews of Lebanon were assured under the constitution as extensive religious, legal, and cultural autonomy as was accorded the other religious communities. The center of Jewish communal activity was Bayrut, where the Alliance maintained the only Jewish school.

Emigration

In 1950, 134 Jews whose principal country of residence was Lebanon emigrated to Israel. There were no indications that the rate of emigration was likely to increase. Lebanon also continued to serve as the route for Syrian Jews emigrating to Israel.

SYRIA

The effects of the 1949 coups d'état in Syria continued to dominate the local political scene in the period under review. The constituent assembly, elected on November 15-16, 1949, finally buckled down on July 7, 1950 to its task of debating the draft of a new constitution. The draft instrument, retaining the basic feature of the 1930 constitution as regards the structure of government, blended the features of progressive European constitutions (including female franchise) with Moslem traditionalism and reaction. The text, as amended by the assembly, was adopted on September 5, 1951 and formally promulgated on the same day.

Between the adoption of a democratic constitution and its execution lay the army and the wealthy landlords, who controlled the unicameral legisla-
ture. The army, which became the real power behind the government in 1949, refused to surrender its position in 1950–51. Thus the instability springing from frequently reshuffled cabinets, was compounded with the unrest deriving from the struggle for power between politicians and army officers, as well as between landlords and proponents of agrarian reform.

**Jewish Population**

As recently as 1943 the Jewish population of Syria was estimated at close to 30,000, of whom perhaps some 17,000 lived in Aleppo and 11,000 in Damascus. By 1947 the number of Jews had been reduced, through emigration, to less than 14,000. As a result of the continuing exodus, the Jewish population was further reduced in 1950–51 to less than 7,000, concentrated in Aleppo and Damascus.

In 1950, 727 Jews whose principal country of residence was Syria settled in Israel.

**Economic Position**

The economic decline of the Syrian Jews antedated the late mandatory regime. The few wealthy merchants remaining in Aleppo in the period following World War I had already adopted the practice of entering into partnership with Moslems, an uncertain safeguard at best and one that provided them little protection during the Palestine war. For the most part, the Jews in Syria were impoverished and dependent on what little relief was available.

**Civic and Political Status**

The guarantees of religious freedom and equality before the law in the constitutions of 1930 and 1950 proved little more than paper safeguards. The unabating incitement of the nationalists, against the background of unsettled political, economic, and social conditions, so undermined the position of the Jews that few, if any, may be expected to remain in Syria.

**Communal Activities**

With the rapid decline in numbers and progressive impoverishment of the Jews who remained, communal activities tended to atrophy. The Alliance still subsidized one school in Damascus in 1950–51.

**Yemen**

Evidence continued to accumulate in 1950–51 that Yemen was beginning to emerge from its traditional extreme isolation. In 1950 Yemen named its representative to the United Nations as Minister to Washington, and an agreement with the United Kingdom of March 10, 1951 provided for a per-
manent diplomatic mission in London. Until 1949 Yemen's representation abroad was limited to the Arab League, the United Nations, and Aden. In February, 1951, a United States naval medical mission conducted a survey of health conditions in Ta'izz, Hudaydah and San'a. At the same time France sent to Yemen an engineer to supervise the construction of a port at Hudaydah and of oil storage tanks in various parts of the country; a specialist in children's and tropical diseases; and an expert in locust control. An Italian engineer was also engaged for the erection of water tanks.

Yemen's major problem of foreign relations was its effort to resolve with the United Kingdom the Yemeni-Aden boundary dispute. Under the March, 1951 agreement the two governments proposed to establish a joint boundary commission to investigate their respective claims and seek a final settlement.

**Emigration**

On May 14, 1948 the Jewish population of Yemen numbered about 50,000. By September 19, 1950, when the last plane left Aden under "Operation Magic Carpet," there remained in Yemen some 3,000 Jews. The precise number transported to Israel by air between December, 1948 and September, 1950 was 47,140. As Yemeni Jews continued to trickle into Aden after September, 1950, the Jewish Agency left behind in the British Colony a small staff to minister to the needs of the arriving refugees. Whenever a sufficient number collected at the Hashid camp in Aden, a plane was diverted from the Iraqi airlift to bring them to Israel. By February, 1951 the Jewish Agency estimated that there were fewer than 1,300 Jews in Yemen. The likelihood therefore existed that the total disappearance of this ancient community was not far distant.

J. C. Hurewitz