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Abstract

This thesis is a study of a political movement which has had a profound influence on the development of modern Iraqi politics. The study has attempted to investigate the historical and ideological origins of Jama'at al-Ahali and its political philosophy, to assess its role in Iraqi opposition politics and its contribution to the national movement as a whole. This has involved a general survey of political and socio-economic developments in late nineteenth and twentieth century Iraq, as well as a more detailed discussion of events in the 1930s and 1940s. Various aspects of the ideology of the group, and its reactions to the deficiencies of the prevailing political system have been related to the particular circumstances of the period.

The thesis has been divided into three parts. Part I deals with the general background of Iraqi history until the beginning of the period of research, and the formation and ideological origins of Jama'at al-Ahali. Part II deals more specifically with events in the 1930s and 1940s, while Part III deals with the role of Jama'at al-Ahali between 1932 and 1946. Thus ChapterII describes the political and socio-economic development of Iraq from the end of the nineteenth century until 1946, while ChapterIII deals with the formation and nature of political parties in general, with special emphasis on the opposition bloc and the position and function of Jama'at al-Ahali within it. Chapter IV,which ends the first part, is divided into

four sections. The first describes the activities of the founders of the group, while still at school and university in Baghdad and Beirut; the second discusses the main ideological influences on the group; the third outlines its formal foundation and the publication of al-Ahali newspaper in January 1932,and the final section analyses the group's ideology, al-Sha'biya.

Part II consists of Chapters V, VI and VII which set the scene for the 1930s and 1940s with special reference to various major events of the period. These events affected either the political system as a whole, or involved Jama'at al-Ahali to a greater or lesser extent.

Finally, Part III, which is divided into four chronological Chapters (VIII - XI) followed by a Conclusion, traces the different stages in the development and activities of the group over the whole period.

JAMA'AT AL-AHALI

ITS ORIGIN, IDEOLOGY, AND ROLE IN IRAQI POLITICS

1932 - 1946

by

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Thesis submitted to the School of
Oriental Studies at the University
of Durham, for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

April
1980

School of Oriental Studies
University of Durham
Durham

14. MAY 1984

Dedicated to my Mother Jamila
Zain al-'Abidin and to the
memory of my dear Father
'Abdullah Amin (1890 - 1954)

Table of Contents

	Page
Acknowledgements	i
Notes on transliteration and abbreviations	iv
Part I	
Chapter I - Introduction	1
Chapter II - Historical Background of Modern Iraq	8
1. Political History 1869-1946	8
2. Economic and social background 1869-1946	26
Chapter III - The Development of Political Parties 1908-1946	44
Chapter IV - The Formation and Ideology of Jama'at al-Ahali	68
1. Student Activities in Beirut and Baghdad 1923-1930	68
2. The Founders: Early Contacts	84
3. The Principal Influences on the Ideology of Jama'at al-Ahali	96
4. The Ideology of Jama'at al-Ahali	116
Part II	128
Introduction	128
Chapter V - Significant Events 1932-1936	129
1. The Assyrian Incident	129
2. The Effect of King Faisal's Death on the Position of the Monarchy and the Political System	140
3. Middle Euphrates Tribal Risings 1934-1937	149
Chapter VI - The Coup of 1936	159
1. The Preparation of the Coup	159
2. Execution of the Coup	175
3. The Unworkable Alliance between The Army and Jama'at al-Ahali	185
Chapter VII - Political and Economic Developments 1941-1946	197
1. The Political Situation	197
2. British Control during the War Years	207
3. Economic Conditions during the War Years	219
4. The Post-War Political Situation	228
Part III The Role of Jama'at al-Ahali in Iraqi Political Life, 1932-1946	246
Introduction	246
Chapter VIII- 1. The Ideological Phase 1932-33	247
2. Editorials, Articles and Interests of al-Ahali Newspaper, 1932-1933	250
3. Personal Conflicts	278
4. Kamil al-Chadirchi joins al-Ahali	289

		Page
Chapter IX -	The Development and Role of Jama'at al-Ahali between 1933 and 1935.	295
Chapter X -	al-Ahali's Involvement in Iraqi Politics 1936-1942.	333
	The Departure of 'Abd al-Fattah Ibrahim.	335
	The Coup of 1936.	339
	Low Profile of Political Activities 1937-1942.	349
Chapter XI -	The Resumption of Political Activities 1942-1946.	352
	Sawt al-Ahali between 1942-1946.	359
Chapter XII-	Conclusion	371
Appendices		
Appendix A :	Secret Treaty between Rashid 'Ali al-Gailani and the Italian Representative in Baghdad, April 1941	381
Appendix B:	Bibliographical details of the Founders of Jama'at al-Ahali	
	'Abd al-Fattah Ibrahim	383
	Husain Jamil	385
	'Abd al-Qadir Isma'il	387
	Kamil al-Chadirchi	389
	Muhammad Hadid	392
Appendix C:	Translation of Minhaj al-Sha'biya(1932)	393
Appendix D:	Shi'i Charter (1935)	396
Appendix E:	Programme of Hikmat Sulaiman's Government (1936)	399
Appendix F:	Letters of Mulla Mustafa Barzani to Sir K. Cornwallis (1943)	403
Appendix G:	Programme of the Popular Reform League (1936)	405
Appendix H:	'Abd al-Fattah Ibrahim's Letter to Ja'far Abu al-Timman (1937)	407
Appendix I:	al-Chadirchi's Proposal for Oil (1937)	409
Appendix J:	The Resignation of the Reformist Ministers 1937)	410
Sources:	Notes on Sources	411
	Bibliography	412

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I am also indebted to the Iraqi historian, al-Sayyid 'Abd al-Razzaq al-Hasani, who not only gave me some valuable insights into the history of the period, but also arranged some of the most important interviews. Thanks are due to Muhmud Subhi al-Daftari, Muhammad Fakhri al-Jamil, Khairi al-'Umari, Dr Fadhil Husain, Dr Muhammad Anis, Mahdi Kubba, Siddiq Shanshal and Naji Shawkat.

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To them, and to every teacher and person who has taught me, I am deeply and for ever grateful.

Notes on transliteration and abbreviations

1. Translation has been kept as simple as possible: no diacritical marks have been used.
2. 'ain and hamza have been indicated by ' .
3. Abbreviations:

Air	Air Ministry Files (Public Record Office, London)
FO	Foreign Office Files (Public Record Office, London)
GSO	General Security Office, Baghdad
INA	Iraqi National Archives, Baghdad (al-Markaz al-Watani li-Hifz al-Watha'iq)
USNA	United States National Archives (Washington, D.C.)

PART I

Chapter I

Introduction

This thesis is a study of a political movement which has had a profound influence on the development of modern Iraqi politics. Jama'at al-Ahali[1] attracted the support and membership of many leading Iraqi intellectuals from its beginnings in the early 1930s until the overthrow of the monarchy in 1958. Although its members only held government office for a fairly brief period between 1936 and 1937, the group and its newspapers helped to awaken the political consciousness of several generations of Iraqis and acted as a focal point of opposition to the political system under the monarchy.

Jama'at al-Ahali was not, strictly speaking, a political party, but a loose grouping of like-minded individuals who believed in a form of social democracy which they called al-Sha'biya, or 'popularism'[2]. Their views were disseminated in the pages of their various publications, which maintained a broadly consistent ideological position and high literary and journalistic standards over more than three decades. al-Ahali's main period of influence, which forms the central concern of this study, began with the last year of the British mandate, and continued through Iraq's early years

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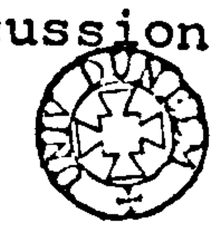
1. In this context, Jama'at means group, association or faction.

2. al-Sha'biya has been translated as 'popularism' rather than populism' in order to distinguish it from the term used in the United States in the nineteenth century. For a more detailed discussion, see Chapter IV, section 4.



as a nominally independent state. The system of indirect rule which the British authorities had introduced in 1920, whereby Iraqi ministers held executive positions, but were backed up by British advisers whose advice had to be taken on all essential matters, gave way to a new system which, although providing an outward appearance of national sovereignty, concealed important structural continuities from the previous period. In these circumstances, the emptiness and corruption of the political system, which effectively excluded the bulk of the population from participation in the political process,became increasingly apparent.

The period prior to 1932 had seen the emergence of a number of political factions, mainly centred around prominent individuals, and based on alliances of mutual interest rather than political principle. The emergence of Jama'at al-Ahali, as a political association with an ideology and definite objectives, was thus an almost entirely new departure. As well as demanding genuine national independence for the country, Jama'at al-Ahali also stressed the need for wide-ranging economic and social reforms, aimed especially at raising the living standards of the poorer sections of the community.

Given the political and socio-economic structure of Iraq in the 1930s and 1940s, and the special nature of her relationship with Britain, it is not surprising that the members of Jama'at al-Ahali were largely frustrated in their efforts to build a new society. However, in spite

of this apparent failure, the influence of the group's ideology and activities on its contemporaries was immense. In the first place, they were articulating ideas which gradually became widely supported throughout society, but which had not previously been expressed in a consistent or coherent fashion. Through the group's newspapers, ideas of social democracy, the provision of universal health, education and welfare services, agrarian reform, and state control of key sectors of the economy became part of the common currency of popular political discussion. The demand for such reforms came to form the core of opposition to the monarchy, and was carried over into the republican period.

Although previous studies of Iraqi history have acknowledged the evident importance of Jama'at al-Ahali, no single work has concentrated on the group's history, development and general significance for its time. Of the older works in English, Khadduri and Longrigg[3], who had no access to original documents, have given brief descriptions of its formation and activities. Two recent theses by Tarbush and Pool[4] are more analytical and more thoroughly researched, but their emphasis is rather different; Tarbush has concentrated on the relationship between Jama'at al-Ahali and the army, particularly in the context of the coup of 1936,

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3. Khadduri,M., Independent Iraq,1932-1958, A Study in Iraq Politics, 2nd edn, London 1960- Longrigg, S.H. Iraq 1900 to 1950, London 1953.

4. Tarbush, M., The Role of the Military in Politics: a case Study of Iraq between 1936 and 1941, unpublished D.Phil. Thesis, Oxford University 1978; Pool,D., The Politics of Patronage:Elite and Social Structure in Iraq, 1921-1958, unpublished Ph.D.Thesis,Princeton University,1972.

while Pool is especially concerned with the workings of patronage within the political system. Batatu devotes several pages to a discussion of the group, but, again, his interests are focussed on a larger canvas, although this has made his work an indispensable source of reference and support[5]. Various detailed studies in Arabic on parts of the period and aspects of the activities of Jama'at al-Ahali have also appeared, with particular emphasis on the person of Kamil al-Chadirchi[6]. Finally, two works on al-Ahali between 1932

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5. Batatu,H., The Old Social Classes and Revolutionary Movements of Iraq: A Study of Iraq's Old Landed and Commercial Classes and of its Communists, Ba'thists, and Free Officers, Princeton 1978.
Although published in the United States in 1978, this study did not become available in England until mid-1979. At that stage the great bulk of the present work had already been written and in almost every case Batatu's findings confirm the conclusions previously reached. The frequent references which have been made to it throughout this study illustrate its fundamental importance to modern Iraqi historiography.

6. See al-'Akkad,S., "Tatawwur al-Yasar fi al-'Iraq" (The development of the Left in Iraq), al-Katib VII, March 1972, (Cairo),pp.96-106; Anis, M., "Jama'at al-Ahali wa nash'at al-Yasar al-'Iraqi" (Jama'at al-Ahali and the growth of the Iraqi Left), al-Hilal LXXIII,January 1965 (Cairo),pp.46-55; al-Mallah,A.., "Shai' 'an Jaridat al-Ahali" (Stories about al-Ahali newspaper), al-Thaqafa,II, Vol.10,November 1972 (Baghdad),pp.9-37.
Ibid., Tarikh al-Haraka al-Dimuqratiya fi al-'Iraq fi Nisf Qarn (History of the Democratic Movement in Iraq over half a century),(Baghdad),1975.
al-'Umari,K., "Dhikrayat 'an Kamil al-Chadirchi" (Memories of Kamil al-Chadirchi), al-Hilal LXXVI, April 1968 (Cairo), pp.26-49.
Ibid., "Kamil al-Chadirchi fi al-Thalathiniyat" (Kamil al-Chadirchi in the Thirties), Dirasat 'Arabiya,VI, February 1970, (Beirut),pp.52-68.
Ibid., "Jaridat al-Ahali min 1932 ila 1937" (al-Ahali newspaper from 1932 to 1937), al-'Aqlam,VI, November 1969 (Baghdad),pp.5-19.

and 1937 by Khalil and al-Wakil appeared in 1973 and 1978, but these are both generally narrative accounts of the group's development between those years[7].

This study has attempted to investigate the historical and ideological origins of Jama'at al-Ahali and its political philosophy, to assess its role in Iraqi opposition politics and its contribution to the national movement as a whole. This has involved a general survey of political and socio-economic developments in late nineteenth and twentieth century Iraq, as well as a more detailed discussion of events in the 1930s and 1940s. Various aspects of the ideology of the group, and its reactions to the deficiencies of the prevailing political system have been related to the particular circumstances of the period.

The research has involved an exhaustive examination of all available sources in Arabic and English relating both to Iraqi history in the period and to the foundation, ideology and activities of the group itself. Three main classes of primary source materials have been used: archives, contemporary newspapers and other publications and interviews with the founders and some of their contemporaries.

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7. Khalil,M., al-Ahali wa al-Haraka al-Wataniya fi al-Iraq 1932-1937 (al-Ahali and the National Movement in Iraq, 1932-1937), unpublished M.A.Thesis, Cairo University,1973. al-Wakil,F., Jama'at al-Ahali fi al-'Iraq 1932-1937 (Jama'at al-Ahali in Iraq), unpublished M.A.Thesis, Baghdad University, 1978. See also the informative thesis by 'A. al-Daraji, Ja'far Abu al-Timman wa dawruhu fi al-Haraka al-Wataniyya fi al-'Iraq,1908-1945 (Ja'far Abu al-Timman and his role in the Iraqi national movement 1908-1945), M.A., Baghdad University 1976, and published Baghdad 1978.

The archives consist of British Foreign Office and Air Ministry papers on Iraq for the period in the Public Record Office, London; correspondence between the American Legation in Baghdad and the State Department in the United States National Archives, Washington D.C. which have not previously been used by researchers, and various papers in the Iraq National Archives, the General Security Office and the General Security Library in Baghdad[8]. Therewas no single complete run of al-Ahali and Sawt al-Ahali newspapers for the period 1932 to 1946, but it has been possible, with considerable effort, to compile one on microfilm from a number of different sources[9]. The group's other publications have been made available through the generosity of the founders. Finally, since all the leading members of the group,with the exception of Kamil al-Chadirchi, are still alive, it has been possible to interview them at length in Baghdad and London at various times between 1975 and 1979. Other political personalities, notably Naji Shawkat, Mahdi Kubba,Siddiq Shanshal, Mahmud Subhi al-Daftari and Muhammad Fakhri al-Jamil also kindly consented to be interviewed.

The thesis has been divided into three parts. Part I deals with the general background of Iraqi history until the beginning of the period of research, and the formation and ideological origins of Jama'at al-Ahali. Part II deals

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8. See the Note on Sources, p.411.

9. Ibid.

more specifically with events in the 1930s and 1940s, while Part III deals with the role of Jama'at al-Ahali between 1932 and 1946. Thus, Chapter II describes the political and socio economic development of Iraq from the end of the nineteenth century until 1946, while Chapter III deals with the formation and nature of political parties in general, with special emphasis on the opposition bloc and the ppsition and function of Jama'at al-Ahali within it. Chapter IV, which ends the first part, is divided into four sections. The first describes the activities of the founders of the group while still at school and university in Baghdad and Beirut; the second discusses the main ideological influences on the group; the third outlines its formal foundation and the publication of al-Ahali newspaper in January 1932, and the final section analyses the group's ideology, al-Sha'biya.

Part II, which consists of Chapters V - VII, sets the scene for the 1930s and 1940s with special reference to various major events of the period. These events either affected the political system as a whole, or involved Jama'at al-Ahali to a greater or lesser extent. Finally, Part III, which is divided into four chronological chapters (VIII-XI) followed by a Conclusion, traces the different stages in the development and activities of the group over the whole period.

Chapter II

The Historical Background of Modern Iraq

In order to set Jama'at al-Ahali in its proper political context, it is useful to give a brief review of Iraqi history from the mid-nineteenth century until 1946. This period has been the subject of a number of scholarly monographs[1] and therefore does not require detailed treatment here. The founding members of Jama'at al-Ahali, and hence their most impressionable years coincided with the end of four centuries of Ottoman rule and the creation of Iraq as a separate entity under British influence at the end of the First World War.

1. Political History 1850 - 1932

Although the formal occupation of Iraq only began with the landing of Indian Expeditionary Force 'D' in Basra in 1914, British Commercial penetration had long dominated political and economic life in the two southern wilayets of Baghdad and Basra. Furthermore, even at the height of Ottoman power, the control exercised by Constantinople over the Iraqi provinces had been largely dependent on the strength of individual governors. In the mid-nineteenth century, most of the area of the modern state lay outside the effective jurisdiction of the central government, but by the end of the century some of the

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1. e.g. Ireland, P.W., Iraq, a Study in Political Development, (London 1937); Sluglett, P., Britain Iraq 1914-1932, (London, 1976); Cohen, S., British Policy in Mesopotamia, 1903-1914, (London, 1976); Batatu, H., (1978).

effects of the Tanzimat had filtered through to the Iraqi provinces, and had begun to weaken the power of the great tribal confederations. During the governorate of Midhat Pasha between 1869 and 1872, a certain degree of economic and administrative reform was introduced, but the increased security which resulted ultimately served to facilitate the expansion of British economic and political influence, particularly after the Anglo-Ottoman Treaty of 1861 and the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. Batatu tells us that the value of British textiles imported through Basra rose from £51,000 in 1868-70 to £1,128,000 in 1897-99 and to £3,066,000 in 1907-09[2].

Furthermore, the Gulf and the route to India had long been an important strategic concern of Great Britain, and this was further accentuated in the early years of the twentieth century by the discovery and development of oil in southern Persia. Britain's anxiety over German-Ottoman plans for the Baghdad railway and German penetration in general were further accentuated by official knowledge of the existence of major oil deposits on either side of the projected line[3]. Thus, when Turkey entered the War on the side of the Central Powers in 1914, British Indian troops were immediately despatched from Bombay to Basra to protect British interests in Iraq. The Mesopotamia campaign began auspiciously for Britain, but in spite of rapid advances in the spring of 1915, a revival of Turkish strength

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2. Batatu, 1978, pp.239-240.

3. Cohen, 1976, p.57. See also Kent, M., Oil and Empire; British Policy and Mesopotamian Oil, 1900-1920 (London, 1976), p.4.

delayed the capture of Baghdad until 1917. As British troops advanced northwards a civil and political administration was set up in the occupied territory. Just after the official ending of the War, Mosul town was occupied, while much of Lower Iraq had been under direct British administrative control for almost four years.

As well as bringing administrative reform, the introduction of the institutions of the Tanzimat at the end of the nineteenth century had had an important impact on the social and intellectual life of the Iraqi provinces. In particular, young Iraqis began to attend civil and military educational establishments in Constantinople. This development took place at the same time as the emergence of important trends of secular nationalism in the Arab countries in general, particularly in Egypt and Greater Syria[4]. In the latter years of the reign of 'Abd al-Hamid II (1876-1908), Arab writers put forward notions of a federal Ottoman state, in which the various provinces would enjoy some degree of autonomy. Arab officers of the Ottoman Army were prominently associated with the Young Turk revolution in 1908, but their hopes for a form of devolution were soon dashed by the new rulers' adoption of a policy which emphasised the essentially Turkish nature of the Ottoman state. As a result, a number of Arab secret societies were formed, whose objectives ranged from the simple administration decentralisatic

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4. See Hourani,A.H., Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939, (London,1970),pp.260-323.

of the Arab provinces to their outright secession from the Empire. al-'Ahd, a group which favoured secession, was dominated by a number of Iraqi officers who were later to play a prominent part in the early years of the independent state, notably Nuri al-Sa'id, Ja'far al-'Askari, Yasin al-Hashimi, Jamil al-Madfa'i, Naji Shawkat and 'Ali Jawdat. Many of these officers took part in the British-inspired Arab Revolt of 1916, and later held office in the short-lived Arab Government in Damascus under Amir Faisal between October 1918 and July 1920.

The First World War left Britain in actual occupation of most of the territory of Greater Syria and Iraq. The Sykes-Picot Agreement had effectively divided the area into British and French spheres of influence in spite of undertakings to Husain, Sharif of Mecca, that an 'independent' Arab state would be created. However, at the end of 1918, the situation in the Middle East was still comparatively fluid, in the sense that the virtual absence of French troops in Greater Syria encouraged the belief that such a state might actually come into being, and the Anglo-French Declaration of 10 November gave further foundation to such hopes. Meanwhile, in Iraq, the extremely rigid form of British Indian administration which had been in existence for four years in parts of Basra wilayet, was now being imposed on the rest of the country. The contrast between the Arab state in Damascus, which was being administered by Arab officials including a number of senior ex-Ottoman officers of Iraqi origin (the Sharifians), and the administration in Baghdad, which was carried out entirely

by British officers and officials, was particularly striking.

The inflexibility of British rule in Baghdad, and its failure in any way to accommodate to Iraqi aspirations eventually played an important part in provoking what is known as the Revolution of June - October 1920. This event is of significance as the first major manifestation of a form of Iraqi national identity, and subsequently played an important role in the country's political mythology as a focus for opposition to the monarchy and for anti-British sentiments[5]. Partly as a result of the Revolution, and partly as a result of other developments in British colonial policy, direct rule by British officials was abandoned in favour of indirect rule by Britain through an ostensibly Iraqi government and civil service backed up by a small but powerful corps of British advisers.

This apparent change of heart was in fact the culmination of a process that had begun at least since the end of the World War. A variety of pressures, but perhaps most notably the entry of the United States into the War on the Allied side in 1917, had combined to make traditional forms of colonialism no longer a practical possibility. In the course of the Paris Peace Conference the mandate concept was elaborated, under which the British and French would govern parts of the former territories of the Central Powers by means of a form of trusteeship from the League of Nations. Theoretically, at least, the

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5. See Nadhmi, W.J.O., The Political, Social and Intellectual Roots of the Iraqi Independence Movement of 1920 (Durham University Ph.D. thesis, 1974), passim.

mandatory power was to prepare the mandated territory for independence at some indefinite point in the future. Thus, under the Treaty of San Remo of 1920, France gained Syria and Lebanon, and Britain, Iraq and Palestine.

The Revolution of 1920 had been embarrassingly expensive for the British government in terms of 'British blood and treasure', particularly as it took place at a time when painful austerity measures had been introduced in Britain itself. It was therefore felt necessary to embark on a policy of cheap but effective administration in Britain's new Middle Eastern 'responsibilities'[6]. To this end a special sub-department was set up in the Colonial Office to coordinate policy and administration. Churchill, the Colonial Secretary, organised a conference in Cairo in March 1921 where the main principles of a new and far cheaper policy was developed. It was decided to set up a national government in Iraq, headed by an Arab ruler. Faisal, the ex-king of Syria, was the obvious candidate for the post[7].

In August 1921, Faisal was duly installed as King of Iraq, and a government and administration set up[8]. In the

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6. 'Incredible waste now proceeding in Mesopotamia can only be cured by driving large numbers of troops and followers out of the country and off our pay list ... We have to carry everybody back sooner or later and keeping them waiting eating up our mutton is pure waste.'
FO 371/6350/E 4830/100,93, S/S Colonies (W.S. Churchill), Cairo, to Prime Minister, London, Tgm of 14 March 1921. Quoted Batatu, 1978, p.325.

7. For further details, see Sluglett, 1976, pp.42-73.

8. See Ireland, 1937, pp.326-33.

course of the years that followed, Faisal did not prove quite the pliant instrument that his British masters had expected him to be, although their monopoly of the means of coercion ultimately meant that the advice that they gave had to be taken. The King and his immediate circle (largely composed of the officers who had served under his command during the Arab Revolt) were constantly involved in a delicate balancing act. They had to satisfy the exigencies of British policy while at the same time retaining some degree of credibility with what may loosely be termed Iraqi national aspirations.

Batatu has shown in great detail the variety of ways in which the British were able both to maintain Faisal's government in power and at the same time to limit its field of manoeuvre[9]. By bolstering the powers of tribal shaikhs and landlords, and limiting the size of the Iraq Army by refusing to permit the introduction of conscription[10], it was possible to ensure that the new government could not act independently. Hence, Faisal and his circle were gradually forced into a tacit alliance with the most reactionary elements in the country, and political life came more and more to resemble an elaborate game of musical chairs, played by individuals whose prime objective was their own self-interest. Although a parliamentary system was provided under the constitution of 1924, elections were always rigged and the democratic process further debased

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9. See Batatu, 1978, pp.53-61, passim.

10. Conscription was not introduced until 1934.

by appointments based on political consideration rather than on merit. During the mandate period, political parties were for the most part simply short term alliances between groups of like-minded individuals. To very great extent, therefore, political life operated in an entirely artificial atmosphere, and occupied itself very little with the major concerns of the bulk of the population, who were excluded from participation in the political process.

In spite of all this manipulation of the political system, it was not possible to prevent the rise of a small but significant number of individuals and groups who came to form the nucleus of opposition to the regime. Significantly for the future, this opposition contributed in a major sense to the politicisation of crucial sections of society, particularly students, the intelligentsia, army officers and the emerging working class. In 1929 when negotiations were in progress for the Treaty that was to replace the existing instrument which governed Anglo-Iraqi relations, the members of Jama'at al-Ahali were in their early twenties, and had participated in much of the opposition political activity of the previous few years. The 1930 Treaty can be regarded as a watershed in Anglo-Iraqi relations, since it provided the mechanism by which Britain could continue to exercise a permanent influence in strategic and political affairs throughout the period of the treaty while at the same time providing Iraq with all the trappings of an independent sovereign state. The size and number of the demonstrations in Baghdad against

the 1930 Treaty showed that most politically conscious Iraqis certainly understood its true significance[11]. Members of Jama'at al-Ahali, which was not founded formally until 1932, were to take the 1930 Treaty as the focus of their opposition to the Iraq Government and the British presence. A despatch from the American Legation accurately summarised the attitudes of the opposition in 1932:-

> Although Iraq became a member of the League of Nations as an Independent and free state, the fact cannot be hidden that perhaps the Iraqian without exception feels that his country is still tied to Great Britain both by written and by implied terms of the Anglo-Iraqi treaty, to an extent which still leaves it under a sufficiently powerful influence of Great Britain which make it impossible for Iraq to be considered or to act as a fully independent State. I believe that I am correct in saying that the views are held by every Iraqian without any exception.[12]

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11. The American Legation noted:

"The treaty gives Great Britain a military hegemony over Iraq and permits that country to dictate all Iraq's foreign relations. That, of course, is the position which Great Britain occupies and consequently in that respect, Iraq's position will not be any worse after 1932 than it is today. However, while the treaty gives Great Britain this predominate power in the Country it frees her from many obligations to Iraq which must be carried out under present arrangements; in other words, Great Britain is receiving a great deal and giving little or nothing in return. If the present treaty is ratified and Iraq becomes a member of the League of Nations, the membership will mean nothing, as the country will be tied, hand and foot, just as it is at present." Sloan (Baghdad) to State Department, 1.11.1930. USNA 890.G.00/134.

12. Sloan (Baghdad) to State Department, 17.11.1932. USNA 890G.00/223.

1932-1946

Although the political system set up by Britain in Iraq during the mandate survived substantially intact until the Revolution of 1958, the period immediately after 'independence' in 1932 witnessed a series of dramatic political upheavals. Here it is important to remember that Iraq was an artificial entity, created in 1918, in which forces for national integration were still comparatively weak. Ethnic and sectarian differences, the cultural and economic distance between city and countryside, the immense disparities between rich and poor, the unrepresentative nature of the political system and the immaturity of political forces which might otherwise have played a unifying role, all resulted in a series of violent internal conflicts which could not be resolved by political means. Thus the period in which Jama'at al-Ahali was active as a political group was overshadowed by tribal uprisings, military coups and ultimately by a further British occupation during the Second World War. In these circumstances politicians and political groupings of all shades of opinion, and even the Palace, were forced into constant changes of alliance with the tribes, the military and the British in order to try to ensure their political survival[13].

Less than a year after the end of the mandate, two major

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13. For this period, see also Khadduri, M., Independent Iraq, 1932-1958. A Study of Iraqi Politics (2nd edn., London, 1960), 'Abd al-Razzaq al-Hasani, Tarikh al-Wizarat al-'Iraqiya (History of the Iraqi Cabinets); (Saida 1974), Vols. V-IX.

events occurred within weeks of each other which were to have far-reaching effects on the country's political system. In July 1933, the Assyrian incident took place, reaching a bloody climax on the third of August, and on the eighth of September, King Faisal died suddenly and unexpectedly in Berne. The significance of the Assyrian affair, which will be discussed in detail in Chapter V , was that it facilitated the emergence of the Army and its commander, Bakr Sidqi, as a force to be reckoned with in Iraqi politics. The King's death created a vacuum in the political arena, which was thus deprived of the cornerstone which had hitherto held the whole precarious edifice together. Although Faisal had been installed and maintained by the British, he had proved a shrewd and capable politician, who had exercised a moderating role on the various conflicting political and social groupings. His son Ghazi, who succeeded him (1933-1939), was a much less impressive personality and lacked his father's political flair and consummate diplomatic skill.

Ghazi's general lack of experience and his active indifference to affairs of state prompted politicians whose ambitions had been partially checked by his father to give their own designs a freer rein. Between 1934 and 1936, a number of factions in Baghdad, including members of Jama'at al-Ahali, incited various tribal leaders in the Middle Euphrates and elsewhere to rise in revolt in order to force the resignation of the governments of Jamil al-Madfa'i, 'Ali Jawdat and Yasin al-Hashimi. The seriousness of these uprisings forced the government to

call on the Army to put them down, which further enhanced the Army's role as a major political force.

In 1936, realising that the Army was the sole instrument available to bring about any major change in the political power structure, Jama'at al-Ahali sided with Bakr Sidqi and his circle in a coup d'état which toppled the government of Yasin al-Hashimi and installed a cabinet dominated by Hikmat Sulaiman and three other members of al-Ahali. The alliance bore little fruit as far as the implementation of al-Ahali's reform programme was concerned, and in fact had as its major consequence a result quite alien to the group's intentions, since the coup itself set a precedent for further military involvement in political life, and resulted in the Army becoming the dominant force in Iraqi politics for the next five years. A despatch from the British Embassy in 1938, summarising the events of the previous year, noted that:

> Many officers in the army continue to give themselves to political intrigue. There is one group seeking opportunities to support Nuri Sa'id's return to power; another sides with the present government; and the third is formed of those who hope somehow to regain what they lost through the passing of Bekr.[14]

Hence the period between 1936 and 1941 saw the rise and fall of a series of military-civilian alliances. When war broke out in 1939, these alliances were polarised into two major camps, the pro-British group headed by

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14. Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs: Annual Report for 1937, FO 371/21856/E794.

Nuri al-Sa'id and the Regent 'Abd al-Ilah (Ghazi had been killed in a car crash in April 1939, and his son Faisal was only four years old), and the Pan-Arab nationalist faction in the army known as the Golden Square, led by Salah al-Din al-Sabbagh, in association with Nadi al-Muthanna (notably Yunis al-Sab'awi) who joined forces with Rashid 'Ali al-Gailani and the influential Hajj Amin al-Husaini, Mufti of Jerusalem. The group favoured a more or less neutral position, and when they came to power in March 1940 refused to bow to British demands to break off diplomatic relations with Italy[15]. Under strong pressure from his military associates[16], Rashid 'Ali declared that the government's relations with Britain would be maintained strictly in accordance with the Treaty of 1930, which gave Britain the right to use Iraqi territory and air space in the event of war but did not require Iraq to play an active role as a belligerent.

Rashid 'Ali's first cabinet lasted from March 1940 to January 1941, a period of the war in which the situation on all fronts seemed particularly grave for Britain and her allies, and a successful outcome for British arms was by no means certain. In the Arab world, the defeats in North Africa and the existence of the pro-Axis Vichy government in Syria encouraged popular

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15. Diplomatic relations with Germany had been broken off in 1939

16. In 1979, Naji Shawkat and Siddiq Shanshal recalled that members of the Golden Square had threatened Rashid 'Ali at gun point in May 1941. See also, al-Hasani, 'A., al-Asrar al-Khafiyya fi Harakat al-Sannat al-Wahid wa al-Arba'in al-Taharruriyya (The Hidden Secrets of the 1941 Liberation Movement), Saida, 1964

anti-British sentiments already influenced by the situation in Palestine, and the hope that an Axis victory might bring substantial political changes in the area[17]. Although Nuri al-Sa'id served as Rashid 'Ali's foreign minister, he was unable to exert any influence on policy, and hence resigned in the autumn of 1940. Throughout this period, Rashid 'Ali and Naji Shawkat were in contact with the Germans through both the Italian Legation in Baghdad and the German Embassy in Ankara[18]. By this time the Golden Square and its civilian counterparts had gained almost overwhelming popular support, and British efforts to undermine Rashid 'Ali and force his resignation were for the time being frustrated. The Regent, 'Abd al-Ilah, feeling that he could no longer influence the course of events, and in an attempt to forestall requests from the Golden Square for his own abdication[19], left Baghdad for Diwaniya, on 30 January 1941, refusing to return until

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17. This was the view of the Mufti, which influenced the Golden Square and Yunis al-Sab'awi and pushed them to take a hard line in face of British demands. Ibid, also see al-Sabbagh, Salah al-Din, Fursan al-'Aruba fi al-'Iraq (The Arab Knights in Iraq), Damascus, 1956.

18. British Intelligence had succeeded in breaking the Italian codes, and successfully intercepted the messages to Rome. For Naji Shawkat's contacts with von Papen in Ankara, see Naji Shawkat, Sira wa Dhikrayat, Thamanin 'Aman 1894-1974 (Memoirs of Eighty years 1894-1974 (Baghdad), 1974, pp.402-410

19. It seems that the Golden Square had already asked Amir Zaid to return to Baghdad from Ankara, where he was head of the Iraqi Legation, in order to replace 'Abd al-Ilah. See Knabenshue to State Department, 26.1.1941, USNA 890G.00/524.

Rashid 'Ali submitted his resignation. The latter, fearing that the Regent might try to raise 'loyal' shaikhs and the local army commander in revolt against his government in Baghdad, obliged by relinquishing his post the following day.

A compromise figure, Taha al-Hashimi, was appointed to succeed Rashid 'Ali. As Commander in Chief of the Army, a former Chief of General Staff, and brother of the late Yasin al-Hashimi, Taha commanded respect among the armed forces and was acceptable both to the British and to the Regent. However, he soon found himself unable either to secure the abrogation of diplomatic relations with Italy or any reduction in the power of the Golden Square. In February, the Mufti, Yunis al-Sab'awi, Rashid 'Ali and the Golden Square jointly pledged themselves in secret to resist any compromise with Britain, and Taha al-Hashimi in his turn was thus obliged to resign a few weeks later.

At this juncture the Golden Square were sufficiently powerful to insist on the reappointment of Rashid 'Ali, who was duly installed as Prime Minister on April 12. Thus the stage was set for a confrontation between Britain and Iraq, which, given an appropriate Axis response, which was however not forthcoming[20], might well have inflicted

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[20]. Although an Oil Treaty was signed in secret by Rashid 'Ali and Gabrieli of the Italian Legation on 26 April 1941. This treaty, whose text appears in the American records, is reproduced as Appendix A.

considerable damage on Britain's strategic position in the Middle East. Faced with the return of Rashid 'Ali and his colleagues to power, the Regent fled to Basra, where he was encouraged by the British authorities to try to form a government in exile[21]. When it became clear that no prominent politician was prepared to lend the Regent his support, the British Ambassador, Sir Kinahan Cornwallis[22] decided that it was now imperative to crush the new government by force, in spite of the logistical difficulties which this involved. He insisted that a battalion of British troops which had arrived at Basra should be allowed to cross Iraq, supposedly en route for Palestine[23]. Rashid 'Ali temporised but troops were in any case flown to R.A.F. Habbaniya. The Iraq Army had already surrounded the base, but when fighting broke out on May 2, the British gained the upper hand almost immediately. Fighting continued sporadically until the end of May, but in fact little serious resistance was encountered. Rashid 'Ali and his colleagues escaped to Iran, and a truce was negotiated between the British and Iraqi forces. Nuri and the Regent returned to Iraq, and the country was

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21. See Knabenshue to State Department, 6.4.1941. USNA 890G.00/544.

22. Cornwallis had been Advisor to the Iraqi Ministry of Interior from 1921 to 1935, when he was dismissed by Rashid 'Ali.

23. Until mid-April 1941, the only British troops in Iraq were stationed at the R.A.F. bases at Habbaniyya, some 70 kilometres from Baghdad, and at Shu'aiba, near Basra. The nearest reinforcements were in Egypt and Transjordan.

subjected to a period of nearly four years of foreign military occupation. The Iraq government now cooperated fully with the British authorities and threw itself whole-heartedly behind the Allied war effort[24]. The Pan-Arab nationalists were arrested or forced into exile, their organisations disbanded and their supporters purged from the armed forces and the administration[25]. The Army was reduced in size, and in fact subordinated to British commanders.

Between 1941 and 1945, the British were chiefly preoccupied with winning the war, and simply required a stable and loyal government in Iraq. In these circumstances, the choice of Nuri as their chief ally was at first the only alternative to direct rule, since he alone could maintain and manipulate the political machinery to their best advantage. Ultimately, however, his evident corruption became an embarrassment, and he was replaced by Hamdi al-Pachachi in June 1944, although in fact he was to remain the eminence grise of all Iraqi governments until his death. Nuri's regime was unable, or more probably unwilling, to clamp down on the spate of profiteering, speculation and hoarding, especially of essential commodities, which caused widespread suffering and deprivation, and immense profits for a small number of merchant entrepreneurs[26]. The process of alienation of

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24. See al-Kitab al-Abyadh (The White Book on the events leading up to the British Aggression in Iraq, The Government Press (Baghdad 1941).

25. Batatu, 1978, p.478.

26. Ibid., pp.224-318.

the government from the governed became so acute during these years that British observers forecast a 'violent confrontation between the haves and the have-nots'[27] and urged Nuri and the Regent to inject some 'new blood' into the government[28].

In spite of the stagnation of political life at the level of government, the years between 1941 and 1946 were marked by a major expansion of political consciousness throughout Iraq, both vertically and horizontally. Local political and economic factors, coupled with the entry of the Soviet Union into the War on the Allied side, the more widespread acceptance of ideas of socialism and communism, both nationally and internationally, and the notion that democracy could only be achieved when the fight against fascism had been won, all contributed to an increased political awareness which was expressed in the growth of ideologically based political parties. Because of the new international order, neither the government nor the British authorities could afford to be seen to be repressing the growth of such organisations[29]. Jama'at al-Ahali, the Iraqi Communist Party, and other

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27. Cornwallis to S/S Foreign Affairs, 30.3.1945, FO.371/45302/E2431.

28. Cornwallis to S/S Foreign Affairs, 8.2.1944, FO.371/40041/E1143.

29. To such an extent that Arshad al-Umari, who became Prime Minister in June 1946, complained to the British Ambassador that the Allies 'were responsible for spreading progressive and communist ideas'. Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs, 5.7.1946. FO.371/52459/E6336.

left-wing groups had been active in promoting their ideas and in reorganising themselves in preparation for their eventual legalisation, or, in the case of the Communist Party, for their tacit acceptance, by the authorities. Hence, in April 1946, five political parties were legally recotnised, three of which were headed by founding members of Jama'at al-Ahali.

2. Economic and Social Background

The main purpose of the previous section was to establish a chronological narrative of events as a background to the formation of political ideologies and organisations. What follows is an attempt to trace the main features of the economic and social history of the period, in order to give a broader perspective to political developments and to permit a fuller understanding of the origins and nature of Jama'at al-Ahali, and the climate in which its members operated.

In the course of the hundred years between 1850 and 1950 the economy of the three Iraqi provinces underwent a gradual transition from virtual subsistence and self-sufficiency to almost total integration in the world economic system. This process has been charted in some detail by the economist M.S. Hasan, who has shown how foreign trade gradually transformed Iraq into a dependent economy[30]. The first signs of this process were evident in the period after the opening of the Suez Canal, a

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30. Hasan, M.S., 'The Role of Foreign Trade in the Economic Development of Iraq 1864-1964: a Study in the Growth of a Dependent Economy', in Cook, M.A., (ed), Studies in the Economic History of the Middle East, (London 1970), pp.346-372.

development which increased British trade to the Gulf and Lower Iraq[31]. Until the discovery of oil, Iraqi exports consisted largely of agricultural and animal produce, notably cereals and dates. Thus, Hasan tells us, exports increased from £147,000 in 1864-71 to £2,960,000 in 1912-13, although the increase in agricultural production (1.2% per annum) did not keep pace with the increase of population (1.9% per annum) nor the increase in foreign trade (2.7% per annum) in the period between the 1860s and the 1950s[32]. Furthermore, British firms such as Andrew Weir and Company, and Lynch Brothers, were substantially involved in the export trade.

i) Demography and Agriculture

The change in the nature of the economy is reflected in the demographic history of the period. In 1867, the population was estimated at 1.2 million, of which 35% were nomads, and 41% settled, that is neither nomads nor townsmen. By 1905, the nomads had dropped to 17%, and by 1930, they formed only 7% of the total population[33]. By the time of the first accurate census in 1947, the

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31. See above, p.9.

32. Hasan, 1970, pp.348-9.

33. Hasan, M.S., al-Tatawwur al-Iqtisadi fi'l-'Iraq The Economic Development of Iraq), (Saida,1965),pp.37-58.

figures were:

		Percentage of total	
Nomads	250,000	5	
Settled	2,700,000	57	
Urban	1,800,000	38	(34)

The process of sedentarisation was greatly influenced by major changes in the nature of land tenure, which began in the late nineteenth century. In their land legislation, as in other aspects of the Tanzimat, the Ottoman government attempted to deal directly with its subjects instead of going through intermediaries. Thus efforts were made to register land in the names of individual owners, to facilitate tax collection in return for security of title.

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34. Hasan, 1965, p.55. The 1947 census, which was the first to be carried out on a scientific basis, gives the following division of the active population:

		Percentage
Agriculture	748,400	57
Industry	95,933	8
Commerce and services	470,979	35

In 1944, Sawt al-Ahali, the newspaper of Jama'at al-Ahali, described the economic division of Iraqi society as follows:

Class (al-tabaqa)	Percentage
Rich (al-ghaniya)	2
Middle (al-wusta)	8
Poor (al-faqira)	70-75
Destitute (al-mu'dama)	15-20

Sawt al-Ahali, 13.8.1944.

Such arrangements, however, had little or no relevance to the actual situation in Iraq, where communal grazing or cropping rights were far more common than individual holdings. Thus, when boundaries and questions of title became matters of greater importance as the demand for Iraqi agricultural produce on the world market increased, the casual nature of the prevailing tenurial arrangements enabled the more astute tribal leaders, along with merchants, notables and officials, to secure the registration of tribal lands (dira) under their own names. In consequence, the tribesmen became economically and legally subservient to their leaders or to their new landlords. In the 1920s this tendency was further encouraged by the mandatory government's conferring judicial and political powers on shaikhs and landlords, in an attempt to create a loyal clientele in the countryside for the new regime.

The main results of this process were, first, the very great enhancement of shaikhly political and economic power, and secondly, the debasement of the status of the tribesman/cultivator. After independence in 1932, the Iraq Government continued similar policies, which served more and more to deprive the peasants of any basic civic rights. Most cultivators lived at terrible extremes of poverty: in the 1950s, a medical expert described the Iraqi fellah as a 'living pathological specimen', with a life expectancy of between 35 and 39 years[35], and a report commissioned by the I.B.R.D. noted that:

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35. Gabbay, R., Communism and Agrarian Reform in Iraq, (London 1978), p.29.

> The standard of living of the people is extremely low. Income per capita is probably at most ID 30. Almost 90% of the population are illiterate, and many are subject to debilitating diseases such as malaria, hookworm, and bilharzia ... [36]

This situation, and its consequences at the other end of the social scale, was vividly described in a despatch from the American Legation in Baghdad in 1935:

> The majority of the people of this country are still living under conditions of a feudal system somewhat similar to that which prevailed in Europe during the middle ages. For the most part, the people are tribal, they give their allegiance first to their shaikhs ... and in many respects they are governed by tribal laws and customs. Thus, the shaikhs are able to wield an influence similar to that of the feudal barons of the mid-ages.[37]

In 1933 the government had enacted the Law Governing the Rights and Duties of Cultivators (No.28). This was claimed to be necessary in order to organise agricultural production more efficiently, and to prevent the migration of cultivators to the cities, but for all practical purposes the law

> ... had the effect of making the peasants tied to the land and their landlords ... One of its debt clauses stated that when a peasant sharecropper was dismissed or moved from the land he must pay his agricultural debt to the landlord immediately and that while the debt was unpaid, unless a certificate of release was obtained from the landlord, employment elsewhere in the economy was prohibited. As the peasants were perpetually in debt,

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36. International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, The Economic Development of Iraq, (Washington 1952), p.1.

37. Knabenshue to State Department, 4.4.1935. USNA 890G.00/326.

> the landlords legally made sure of their labour supplies and thereby denied flexibility of supply to other interests. Peasants were, however, not tied to specific land areas; they were moved by the landlord when necessary and so developed little interest in the land itself.[38]

Under the monarchy successive governments enacted and amended various laws in relation to land settlement policies and to regulate cultivation[39], which further consolidated the powers of the shaikhs and landowners. Batatu explains:

> In their practical effect - and as far as the shaikhly class was concerned - these laws amounted to a legal recognition of a process that had been taken place for some decades in the tribal countryside: the usurpation by the shaikh of the communal tribal land, his dispossession of weaker neighbours and his encroachment on virgin state lands. On the shaikh was now conferred an exclusive, private, and free title to all these acquisitions.[40]

The tribal shaikhs were not alone in indulging in such practices. Politicians and merchants had begun to use their positions and influence to acquire land on a large scale in the 1920s[41] and subsequently continued to indulge in

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38. Langley, K., The Industrialisation of Iraq, (Cambridge, Mass.,1967),p.68.

39. Settlement of Land Rights No.50 of 1932: the Lazma Law of 1932, and their various amendments.

40. Batatu, 1978, p.110. Table 5 - 1 shows the extent of the concentration of landholding in 1958, before the Revolution. Batatu.1978, p.54.

41. Sluglett,1976, pp.92,101.

dubious land transactions. In 1943, the acute conditions which prevailed widely in the countryside prompted the British ambassador to criticise:

> Nuri Sa'id's natural reluctance to offend powerful agricultural and mercantile vested interests. I blamed Nuri for the shameless land-grabbing carried on by prominent personalities, and the general lack of courageous leadership and the wide gulf between the government and the people. [42]

The widespread salination caused by over-cultivation, which was made possible by the introduction of mechanical pumps[43], caused a net decline in yields, and, together with the repressive legislation which has been described, produced a large scale rural exodus, and the intensification of rural underemployment.

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42. Cornwallis to S/S Foreign Affairs, 6.11.1943. FO 371/35013/E7266.

43. In 1926 the Law for the Encouragement of Cultivators for the Use of Pumps was introduced. Article Three is as follows: 'All enhancement of land produced resulting from the use of pumps in respect of land already under cultivation and similarly the whole land produce resulting from the use of the said pumps in respect of lands which were previously uncultivated shall be exempt from government share.'
The number of pumps in use rose rapidly during this period. In 1921 there were 143, in 1929, 2031, and in 1944-45, 2757.
See Sluglett, 1976, p.258.

This ruinous cycle was aggravated further by the fact that the shaikhs and landlords, who were largely absentees, spent the greater part of the proceeds from the sale of agricultural surplus on consumer goods rather than on productive investments. They spent very little on the maintenance, let alone the improvement, of the fertility of the soil, or the irrigation canals. They seem to have shown little or no interest in improving productivity, and the state of decline into which agriculture fell in these years has remained a major obstacle to economic development until the present time.

ii) Industry

Until the 1930s and 1940s, no major industrial enterprises had been developed in Iraq. The economy was primarily based on agriculture and apart from small local craft manufacture, most industrial and consumer goods were imported. Investment remained at a low level until the shortages caused by the second World War encouraged something of an industrial take-off which was given further impetus by the very considerable increase in oil revenues which took place in the years after 1951.

Apart from a shortage of the raw materials necessary for industrial development a number of other constraints operated to prevent the growth of an industrial sector of any magnitude in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The general caution on the part of owners of capital, who preferred to invest in commerce, land, or urban properties

which gave faster profits and fewer risks, has already been alluded to. Secondly, the size of the home market was extremely limited, since most of the population was too poor to participate to any extent in the money economy. In the third place, local handicrafts or small industries could not compete with the products of the European industrial revolution. Tariff protection, introduced rather half-heartedly in the late 1920s and early 1930s had little effect. A further constraint was the lack of both trained managerial staff and skilled labour. As far as the work force was concerned, many of them were recent migrants from the countryside who were generally illiterate and undernourished. Hours were long and wages low[44], and during the war years a decline in real wages led to severe hardships[45]. Labour laws enacted in the 1930s and 1940s[46] only covered establishments employing more than 12 workers, and even there the application of the laws was not universal.

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44. The average annual income of industrial workers in the period 1939-45 ranged between ID 50 and ID 70. Jawad,H., Muqaddima fi Kiyan al-'Iraq al-Ijtima'i (Introduction to the Social Structure of Iraq),(Baghdad,1946),p.77.

45. See Batatu, 1978, p.471, Table 17-2: Popular Uprisings in the Forties and Fifties and the Cost of Living Index for Unskilled Laborers in Baghdad City.

46. e.g. Law 72 of 1936, amended in 1942, regulating Labour and Factories.

The three largest employers of labour in the period between 1932 and 1946 were the Basra Port Authority, the Iraq State Railways, and the Iraq Petroleum Company. A few Iraqis held positions of responsibility in the Railways and Port managements, but in the oil company Iraqis were only employed in unskilled and semi-skilled positions. Furthermore, the turnover into the rest of the industrial sector was small, since wage rates in these three enterprises were generally relatively high and working conditions favourable. However, it is significant that the first effective labour unions were formed within these enterprises in the course of the 1940s, and since all three concerns were foreign owned, the labour movement became closely involved in the struggle for national independence from its earliest days.

Despite the constraints which have already been mentioned, some industries did develop in the late 1930s and 1940s, particularly in response to the shortages experienced after 1939. These tended to specialise in products for which there was already an established local demand, and were built on the foundations of the older industries. Hence modern textiles, cigarettes, soap, cement, leather and vegetable oil factories were set up. Many of these were given assistance by being awarded government contracts, as well as loans from the Agricultural and Industrial Bank, set up in 1936.

Oil Revenue and Oil Production 1934-46

Year	Production(a) (millions of long tons)	Revenue(b) (thousands of dinars)	Revenue as percentage of national revenue(a)
1934	1.06	989	19.6
1935	3.66	598	11.1
1936	4.02	600	9.9
1937	4.29	731	10.5
1938	4.32	1,977	25.2
1939	4.04	2,014	21.8
1940	2.65	1,576	16.2
1941	1.61	1,534	15.1
1942	3.25	1,576	11.4
1943	3.78	1,880	10.3
1944	4.25	2,225	11.7
1945	4.62	2,316	11.4
1946	4.60	2.327	9.3

(47)

47. (a) Batatu, 1978, pp.106-7 (Table 6-2).
(b) Longrigg, S.H., Oil in the Middle East: its Discovery and Development, London 1954, p.478.

The oil industry, Iraq's main source of wealth, operated very much on the margin of the economy, since it imported most of its own needs from Europe and the U.S.A. and its product was not used to stimulate industry within the country. The company gained its first concession in 1925, and oil in commercial quantities was first struck in 1927. However, at this stage, world demand for oil was relatively limited, and exploitation on a large scale did not take place for some years. The concession was arranged on a royalty basis, the government receiving a payment equivalent to a certain percentage of production. Between 1929 and 1931, the government's economic position was so desperate that the oil company advanced 'dead rents' against future royalty payments. This effectively bound the government to the company, and prevented them from obtaining more favourable terms, a state of affairs which lasted until the early 1970s.

iii) Trade

Throughout the period between 1850 and 1950, foreign trade was the chief determinant of the structure of the Iraqi economy. British imports, and British controlled exports, dominated Iraqi trade during these years: British and other foreign companies used local agents, who were generally from religious or ethnic minorities. A despatch from the British Embassy in Baghdad

in 1934 underscores the extent of this penetration:

> The foreign commercial interests in Iraq, owing to the existence of the British connexion, are predominantly British ... The greater part of the country's foreign trade is carried in British ships. The foreign capital sunk in the country is almost exclusively British. Two of the three banks are entirely British, including the Eastern Bank, which handles all government cash, the capital of the third bank, the Ottoman, is about one-third British and has a number of British directors. All important insurance business is in the hands of British firms. In another sphere of activity, the Euphrates and Tigris Steam Navigation Co. is a long established British Co., operating, with but one native competitor, river transport on the Tigris between Basrah and Baghdad. It owns a fleet of 18 steamers and has about £250,000 invested in Iraq. In every direction, despite intense Japanese competition, British commercial influence remains paramount.[48]

The companies exported wool, grain and dates and other primary products and imported all kinds of consumer goods, which accounted for nearly two-thirds of imports between 1926 and 1945 . Thus:

> Modern housing and furniture came very much into vogue from the 1930s. In addition, the use of luxurious motor cars by the upper income groups, and of ordinary motor cars by the middle classes, became widespread. On the other hand, the consumption by the other sections of the urban population of cheap textiles, tea and sugar, also increased, especially during the 1950s and 1960s.[49]

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48. Humphrys (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs 1.2.1934, FO 406/72 E962/190/93. Quoted Batatu, 1978, p.268. Only one of the 25 'first class' companies affiliated to The Baghdad Chamber of Commerce in 1938-39 was owned by an Iraqi.

49. Hasan, 1970, p.362.

Very considerable profits could be made from commerce, although most of these went out of the country to foreign countries. Gradually Iraqi entrepreneurs also became attracted to the import-export trade, and began to import directly in their own right, increasing their number and wealth. Since their prosperity was dependent on the political and economic status quo, they curried favour with the royal family and leading politicians, thus bolstering an already corrupt system. However, their newly acquired wealth was generally not, as has already been mentioned, used to stimulate the economy in any productive fashion. Instead, the oil revenues permitted a 'lop-sided' development, thus:

> It is this duality in the Iraqi economy or its development into a mono-economy, dependent almost entirely on oil production and exports, or the economically unbalanced relation between the foreign oil sector and the domestic economic sector, or finally the disequilibrium between Iraq's foreign trade and her home trade, which constitutes the end-result of the interaction between foreign trade and investment and the local backward economy of Iraq during the past hundred years.[50]

Education

It has already been noted that the politicisation of certain important sections of society began in the 1920s and 1930s, in response to contemporary economic and political developments. In this connection the spread of education played a vital part. In the Ottoman period,

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50. Ibid., p.372. See also Issawi, C., 'Egypt since 1800; a Study in Lop-sided Development', Journal of Economic History, xxi (1), 1961.

educational opportunities were very restricted; there were only two state secondary schools, in Baghdad and Mosul, in 1914, and two military secondary schools (al-'Adadiya al-'Askariya). In this respect, the minority communities were slightly better off, because of the missionary schools for the Christian population and the Alliance Israélite for the Jews, all of which also admitted Muslim children. In general primary education for Muslims was largely confined to the mulla schools, where children were taught the three Rs and elementary Quranic studies, although some state elementary schools had been built by 1914[51]. However, these schools were almost entirely concentrated in the cities, and since they were run by the Sunni state, they were not attended by the Shi'i population. Furthermore, since child labour was widespread and often an economic necessity, poorer families were often not in a position to educate their children. Hashim Jawad estimates that only 1% of the population was literate at the end of the First World War[52].

During the mandate, educational facilities were gradually expanded, and budget allocations increased from about 3% at the beginning of the period to almost 8% at the end, and averaged 10% in the years between 1932 and 1946.

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51. Himada, S., al-Nidham al-Iqtisadi fi'l-'Iraq (The Economic System of Iraq), (Beirut, 1938), p.46.

52. Jawad, 1946, p.104.

The actual numerical increase was impressive:

	Elementary Schools	Pupils	Intermediate and Secondary Schools	Pupils
1920-1	88	8,000	4	110
1934-5	528	60,324	35	6,058
1945-6	944	118,487	59	12,173 [53]

In fact, education, in common with health and agriculture, was largely run by Iraqis during the mandate period, in contrast to the Ministries of Finance, Defence and Interior, which were directed by British personnel. Although there was a British Adviser at the Ministry of Education throughout the 1920s, policy was largely in the hands of the Director-General, Sati' al-Husri, who had been Faisal's Director of Education in Damascus. al-Husri was an energetic educationalist, who had the King's constant support in his efforts to expand and redirect the system. In particular he was responsible for the introduction of nationalist ideas into the school syllabus, which deeply influenced a whole generation of young people.

In spite of the expansion of education, and its relative independence from foreign control, there were constant complaints from all parts of the country that the programme was insufficient, particularly in the rural areas; in 1946, for example, illiteracy was still estimated at over 90%[54]. However, the major deficiency of the system

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53. Figures taken from Jawad, 1946, pp.105-106, and al-Marayati, A., A Diplomatic History of Modern Iraq (New York 1961), pp.163-5.

54. Jawad, 1946, p.116.

lay as much in its orientation, which remained rooted to the Ottoman tradition from which it had sprung. It was heavily dominated by the humanities, and its main purpose continued to be the production of clerical and higher civil servants; while scientific and technological training did not receive high priority. The Monroe report, commissioned by the government in 1931[55], criticised the lack of vocational, industrial and agricultural schools, and the over-concentration of facilities in the urban areas. This report, and others which followed it, were largely ignored by the Ministry of Education, which preferred to continue with the system with which it was familiar, but which was largely irrelevant to the needs of the country. Only one agricultural and two industrial secondary schools were founded, and these had produced only 78 and 351 diploma students respectively by 1943-44[56]. In a country where over 70% of the population worked in agriculture, and whose wealth derived from oil, it seems almost inconceivable that more attention was not paid to setting up more of such institutions to meet the present and future needs of the country. One of the results was that Iraq long remained dependent on foreign expertise in most of the key sectors of the economy, particularly in engineering, science and technology.

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55. Paul Monroe was Professor of Education at Columbia University, New York.

56. Jawad, 1946, p.115.

Higher education also expanded significantly during the mandate and monarchy periods. In 1920-21, 65 students attended post-secondary institutions in Iraq. In 1932-33 there were 115, and by 1945-46 there were 2146, of whom 284 were women[57]. In addition, increasing numbers of students were studying at foreign universities and technical institutions, mostly in the Arab world, Europe and North America, both on government scholarships and at their families' own expense. Three of the founders of Jama'at al-Ahali had studied abroad; Muhammad Hadid at the American University of Beirut and the London School of Economics, 'Abd al-Fattah Ibrahim at the American University of Beirut and Columbia University, and Husain Jamil at the School of Law in Damascus. The growth in the student and graduate population was a crucial factor throughout the period and was a major influence in the development of opposition political organisations, notably Jama'at al-Ahali and the Communist Party.

Perhaps most important of all was the fact that all strata of the population, including the very poor, were intensely concerned to provide their children with at least the bare minimum of education, and would often make enormous sacrifices in order to make this possible. Those who succeeded in spite of difficulties and hardships often emerged with indelible aspirations for social justice, and also became willing recruits for the new opposition parties.

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57. al-Marayati, 'A., 1961, p.170.

Chapter III

The Development of Political Parties, [a] 1908 - 1946

Before discussing the formation of Jama'at al-Ahali and the background of its founders, it is useful to consider the development of political consciousness over the period between 1908 and 1946, concentrating on the political parties and organisations founded in these years. Until 1908, no formal political organisations existed in Iraq, but when the Young Turk revolution took place in that year branches of the Committee of Union and Progress were opened in the three major cities. As the new regime in Istanbul revealed its essentially anti-Arab colours, various societies were formed, notably Jam'iyyat al-Islah (The Reform Association) in Basra, under the presidency of Sayyid Talib al-Naqib, and al-'Ahd, which had established branches in Mosul, Baghdad and Basra before the outbreak of the First World War[1].

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1. Other important political organisations were: Hizb al-Hurr al-Mu'tadil (The Moderate Liberal Party) established in Basra and Baghdad in 1911. Hizb al-Hurriya wa al-'Itilaf (The Liberty and Accord Party) was established in Baghdad in 1912, and Jam'iyyat al-Nadi al-Watani (The National Club Society) which was founded in Baghdad in 1912.
For further details see Atiyyah, G., Iraq: 1908-1921, A Socio-Political Study, (Beirut 1973), pp.53-70.

a) for the main political alignments, see p.47

After the War, and the ending of the Ottoman Empire, the focus of political activity naturally changed. By 1918, some parts of Iraq had been occupied by British troops for four years. During this time, opposition had grown up which was eventually to crystallise in the events of 1920. In 1919, Jam'iyyat Haras al-Istiqlal (The Association for the Safeguarding of Independence) was founded, the first of its kind to take an overtly anti-British stand, calling for the independence of Iraq from foreign rule, and for the formation of a constitutional government. Its leaders were the Shi'i notables Amin al-Charchafchi, 'Ali Bazirgan, Muhammad al-Sadr, and also Ja'far Abu al-Timman[2], who was later to become a prominent member of Jama'at al-Ahali, and one of Iraq's most respected political figures.

In 1921, when the Iraq state was established under the British mandate, it soon became clear that neither the politicians nor the population as a whole were going to be given any opportunity to participate in constructing the new political system. The British High Commissioner and the advisers held real authority: hence they immediately:

> began to exploit those internal conditions which were unfavourable to democratic institutions in order to strengthen their own position. Political institutions formed at that time did not spring from the social forces existing nor did they express the true desires of the people.[3]

The result was a weak political system and an empty facade

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2. al-'Akkam, 'A., al-Haraka al-Wataniya fi al-'Iraq 1921 - 1932 (The Iraqi national movement 1921-1932), (al-Najaf, 1975), pp.27-29.

3. Khadduri, M., Political Trends in the Arab World, (Baltimore 1972), p.33.

of democratic institutions, which the poet Ma'ruf al-Risafi described as:

> This government of ours and all its pride
> are lies, and all its deeds are pretentious.
> A flag, a constitution, and a national assembly
> each one a distortion of the true meaning.[4]

Shortly before King Faisal's coronation in August 1921, a number of leading politicians, notably Ja'far Abu al-Timman, Yusuf al-Suwaidi, Amin al-Charchafchi, and Ja'far al-'Askari, met together and decided to form a political party which would seek Iraq's independence from Britain. At a second meeting, they were told that Faisal did not favour the formation of political parties, believing them to be against the national interest. His Syrian experience had taught him that political parties had a divisive effect, and he considered that they had prevented him taking a united stand against the French[5]. Instead, he hoped that the Iraqi politicians would support him in order to enable him to consolidate his leadership. However, Abu al-Timman and al-Charchafchi would not take his advice, and formed their own parties, al-Hizb al-Watani al-'Iraqi (The Iraqi National Party), and Hizb al-Nahdha (The Revival Party) respectively[6].

Throughout the mandate period, and indeed until 1958, one of the main issues in Iraqi politics was the precise

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4. Ma'ruf al-Rasafi, Hukumat al-Intidab (The Mandate Government, in Diwan al-Rasafi, (Cairo 1949), pp.453-6.

5. al-Hasani, 'A., (1974), vol.111, p.208.

6. For the parties'programmes see Ibid., pp.216-18.

The Different Phases, Dominant Political Factions and Personalities which Marked Iraqi History Between 1932 and 1946

The Period	The Dominant Power	Dominant Political Factions and Personalities
1932-33	King Faisal	All political and social factions had a share in balancing each other, tribal shaikhs, ex-Ottoman officials, pro-British politicians, sadah, merchants, nationalists, Iraqi nationalists and Pan-Arab nationalists, and the following political factions: al-'Ahd, al-Ikha', al-Watani, al-Nahda. Faisal depended mainly on ex-Sharifian army officers.
1934-36 a) 1934-35	Middle Euphrates Tribal Risings — a) 'Abd al-Wahid al-Hajj Sikkar al-Ikha' faction	'Ali Jawdat and Jamil al-Madfa'i, National Union Party, (moderate faction)
b) 1935-36	b) anti-'Abd al-Wahid faction	Yasin al-Hashimi (al-'Ikha') and Nuri al-Sa'id and Ja'far al-'Askari (al-'Ahd) in Coalition supported by Nadi al-Muthanna and Pan-Arab nationalist army officers
1936-41 a) 1936-37	The Army — a) Bakr Sidqi (Iraqi Nationalists)	Hikmat Sulaiman and Jama'at al-Ahali (Iraqi nationalist and progressive)
b) 1937-39	b) Amin al-'Umari and Husain Fawzi (the moderates and Golden Square Pan-Arab)	Jamil al-Madfa'i (moderate faction)
c) 1939-40	c) Golden Square	Nuri al-Sa'id (pro-British)
d) 1940-41	d) Golden Square	Rashid 'Ali (al-'Ikha') and Yunis al-Sab'awi (Nadi al-Muthanna) (Pan-Arab nationalist)
1941-46 a) 1941-44	British Control	Nuri al-Said and The Regent
b) 1944-46		The Regent and (Nuri al-Sa'id, Hamdi al-Pachachi and Tawfiq al-Suwaidi)

nature of the country's relationship with Britain. Even before the signature of the first Anglo-Iraqi Treaty in 1922, and its ratification by the Chamber of Deputies in 1924, various shades of opinion on the question had developed among the politically active which crystallised into three loose and by no means permanent sets of alliances which continued to function until, and in some cases beyond, the end of the mandate. Occasionally, these groupings acquired the names and even the constitutions of political parties, but they were primarily pragmatic coalitions of interested individuals. It was not until the appearance of Jama'at al-'Ahali in 1932 that a political party or group with a defined ideological platform and programme came into existence.

The first group consisted of those who considered that Iraq needed British assistance and tutelage in order to be able to develop into an independent entity at some point in the future. Although it is convenient to refer to this group as the 'pro-British politicians', such a description admittedly overlooks the complexity of the situation. Although many of these individuals came to benefit substantially from their co-operation with Britain, many of them clearly set out with the belief that, given the reality of the British presence, such a course of action was the best way to achieve independence in the long term. Prominent members of this group included several Prime Ministers, including 'Abd al-Rahman al-Naqib,

Ja'far al-'Askari, 'Abd al-Muhsin al-Sa'dun, Nuri al-Sa'id, 'Ali Jawdat, and Jamil al-Madfa'i[7].

The second group, which was more or less the direct antithesis of the first, can be called the 'Iraqi nationalists' or the 'permanent opposition', and consisted of those who rejected first the British presence in the 1920s and early 1930s, and then the whole political apparatus of the regime under the monarchy. These individuals generally refused to accept government office, and although initially relatively few in number, enjoyed considerable personal prestige and commanded wide popular support. Among other members of this group were Ja'far Abu al-Timman, Amin al-Charchafchi, 'Ali Mahmud, and subsequently Yunis al-Sab'awi, Mahdi Kubba, Kamil al-Chadirchi, Jama'at al-Ahali (after 1932) and the Communist Party (after 1934).

The third group, the 'token opposition' occupied an intermediate position between the other two, in that it alternated between support and rejection of the Treaty and the British presence. In opposition, its leaders allied with the Iraqi nationalists, and played on popular anti-British sentiment, but the group was prepared to accept ministerial office in a form of partnership with the pro-British politicians. Its most important members were

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7. al-Sa'dun committed suicide in 1929. By 1930 this group had split into two factions: Hizb al-'Ahd formed by Nuri and Ja'far, was entirely pro-British, while Jamil Madfa'i and 'Ali Jawdat took a more moderate stand.Later in 1934 Jawdat formed the short-lived Hizb al-Wahda al-Wataniyd .

Yasin al-Hashimi, Rashid 'Ali al-Gailani and Hikmat Sulaiman, (the leaders of Hizb al-Sha'b (1926) and Hizb al-Ikha' al-Watani (1930)).

The two parties that have been mentioned already, Hizb al-Nahdha and al-Hizb al-Watani, fall into the second or opposition group. In 1922, they co-operated to oppose the first Anglo-Iraqi Treaty, and organised popular protests and demonstrations. The extent of the opposition prompted the High Commissioner, Sir Percy Cox, to assume full powers when the King suddenly fell ill with appendicitis. He disbanded the two parties, and banned the two opposition papers, al-Mufid and al-Rafidan, and 'packed the nationalist leaders off to Henjam'[8]. At the same time, the British authorities intimated to Mahmud al-Naqib, the eldest son of the first Prime Minister, that he should form a 'pro-British' party called al-Hizb al-Hurr al-'Iraqi[9] (The Iraqi Liberal Party) which would support his father's cabinet. Its aim was to fill the political vacuum created by the suppression of the nationalist parties and newspapers, and most importantly, to assist the government to approve the 1922 Treaty. This party was typical of a number of political machines created by various governments to play carefully orchestrated roles in the political arena. As soon as the Treaty was signed in November 1922, and the

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8. Sluglett (1976), p.78. Henjam is an uninhabited island in the Gulf.

9. al-'Akkam, 1975, p.460.

al-Naqib Cabinet was forced out of office, al-Hizb al-Hurr disintegrated, since there was no longer any reason for its existence[10].

Between 1924 and 1925 three political parties were formed by Moslawi Arabs in order to oppose Turkey's claim to the Mosul Wilayat, which was the subject of a League of Nations Commission of Enquiry. These parties received government support, and financial aid from the King[11]. They were Hizb al-Istiqlal al-Watani (National Independence Party), formed in September 1924: Jam'iyyat al-Difa' al-Watani (The National Defence Association), formed in January 1925, and al-Hizb al-Watani (The National Party) formed in May 1925. The sole purpose of these three organisations was the maintenance of Mosul within Iraq, and when this objective was achieved in December 1925, the parties dissolved.

After the eventual ratification of the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty, which took place in July 1924, and the establishment of the Constitution on parliamentary lines, the King and his associates, as well as the British authorities, seem to have recognised the desirability of creating some form of 'political life'. Hence 'government' and 'loyal opposition' political parties were formed. Thus, when 'Abd al-Muhsin al-Sa'dun was appointed Prime Minister in July 1925,

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10. al-Hasani, 1974, vol.111, p.210.

11. al-'Akkam, 1975, p.466.

he founded the Hizb al-Taqaddum (Progress Party) formed from suitable members of the Chamber of Deputies. The Party became the majority in the Chamber by the simple expedient of actually consisting of the majority of Deputies, and thus the Prime Minister could claim that he had formed his cabinet from the majority party. However, even this was not sufficient to secure an easy passage for al-Sa'dun, since the King engaged in constant backstairs intrigue against him. He resigned in November 1926, and was succeeded by a more dependable ally of Faisal, Ja'far al-'Askari, with the help of the 'loyal opposition', which consisted of the Hizb al-Sha'b, founded by Yasin al-Hashimi and Rashid 'Ali in November 1925[12], supposedly to oppose the Anglo-Iraq Treaty of 1924 and the Financial Agreement of 1926. al-'Askari in his turn also needed a 'majority' party, and in strict adherence to constitutional practice turned to the Hizb al-Taqaddum.

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12. The Chamber of Deputies rejected al-Sa'dun's candidate for the office of Speaker of the Chamber (Hikmat Sulaiman, later a prominent member of Hizb al-Ikha' al-Watani and subsequently of Jama'at al-Ahali), and instead chose Rashid 'Ali. al-Sa'dun interpreted this as a vote of no confidence and promptly resigned exactly as King Faisal had envisaged.

For a moment there seemed to be a difficulty, since he was not himself a Deputy. However, this was quickly overcome when the Party's executive inserted a new clause in its statutes allowing Ministers and Senators to become members. al-Sa'dun resigned the leadership in al-'Askari's favour and was in turn given the Speakership of the Chamber[13].

In fact, al-Sa'dun became Prime Minister on two further occasions from January 1928 until January 1929, and from September 1929 to his suicide in mid-November the same year. The Party functioned sporadically throughout these two ministries, but ceased to function after the death of its founder. The Hizb al-Sha'b exercised the function of loyal opposition until its leader Yasin al-Hashimi was persuaded to accept a portfolio in al-'Askari's government in November 1926. While in office, al-Hashimi ignored his Party and actually supervised the passage of the Financial Agreement which he had previously denounced, while simultaneously laying the foundations of a substantial private fortune[14]. As a result, his followers both inside and outside the Chamber became disillusioned and the Party collapsed.

In March 1930, Faisal appointed Nuri al-Sa'id Prime Minister in order to conclude the 1930 Anglo-Iraqi Treaty,

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13. See al-Hasani, 1974, vol.III, pp.210-11. al-'Akkam, 1975, pp.464-472.

14. See al-Qaisi,S., Yasin al-Hashimi wa dawrahu fi al-Siyasa al-Iraqiya (1922-1936) (Yasin al-Hashimi and his role in Iraqi Politics (1922-36)),Baghdad,1976.

which would end the Mandate and supposedly lead to "al-Istiqlal al-Tamm" (Complete Independence). The King and the British wished to pass the Treaty as fast and as smoothly as possible, and in order to do this the opposition had to be muzzled.Nuri first dissolved Parliament, re-assembling a more favourable one, and then formed Hizb al-'Ahd al-Iraqi, (The Iraqi Covenant Party) whose name resembled the pre-war secret society of which Nuri had been an active member, from a number of hand picked deputies in the same manner in which al-Sa'dun had formed Hizb al-Taqaddum and published Sada al-'Ahd as the party newspaper. After these preparations, Nuri naturally succeeded in passing the Treaty in June 1930, against a background of fierce popular opposition[15].

Meanwhile, Yasin al-Hashimi and Rashid 'Ali al-Gailani were once more organising an opposition party, Hizb al-Ikha' al-Watani, to press for the revision of the Treaty, and the resignation of Nuri al-Sa'id's government[16]. The

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15. See Chapter IV. Section 1

16. The elected Executive Committee included Naji al-Suwaidi, Rashid 'Ali al-Gailani, Hikmat Sulaiman, Ali Jawdat al-'Ayyubi, Muhammad Zaki, Yusuf Ghanima, Abd al-Ilah Hafidh and Kamil al-Chadirchi; at one time it also included Muhammad Ridha al-Shabibi, 'Abd al-Wahid al-Hajj Sikkar and Muhsin Abu Tabikh.
al-Akkam, 1975, p.481, also al-Hasani, 1974, Vol.III, p.202.

task of opposition was complicated by the fact that Nuri's Hizb al-'Ahd al-'Iraqi had 74 out of the 88 seats in the Chamber, but al-Hashimi approached Ja'far Abu al-Timman, the veteran nationalist leader of the Hizb al-Watani, seeking joint co-operation and a united front. In this, al-Hashimi was successful, and the two parties issued Wathiqa al-Ta'akhi (the Charter of Brotherhood) which denounced the Treaty and the unrepresentative nature of the Parliament which had passed it, and significantly, stressed that any future government should make rejection or revision of the Treaty a firm condition for holding office[17].

The two parties continued to co-ordinate their activities, holding regular meetings and leading joint protests and demonstrations. However, Faisal eventually succeeded in creating a rift between them, and within Hizb al-Ikha', by offering the post of Chief of the Royal Diwan to Rashid 'Ali. The leadership of the party (except for Kamil al-Chadirchi) could not resist this chance of power, and Rashid 'Ali accepted the post in June 1932. The final blow came in March 1933, when Rashid 'Ali agreed, with the approval of the leadership of Hizb al-Ikha' to form a government, without any specific commitment to the revision of the Treaty. This disassociated him entirely from the Wathiqa al-Ta'akhi and the whole previous platform

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17. Nida' al-Sha'b, 23.11.1930, Quoted al-'Akkam, 1975, p.483.

of the Hizb al-Ikha'. Abu al-Timman bitterly criticised the decision to form a government, and announced the Charter dissolved. In 1933, he announced his retirement from politics, although he was persuaded to join Jama'at al-Ahali shortly afterwards[18].

In the meantime, Hizb al-Ikha' remained active. Rashid 'Ali resigned from the Premiership in October 1933, and under the ministries of his two successors (Jamil al-Madfa'i; November 1933-August 1934, 'Ali Jawdat; August 1934-February 1935, Jamil al-Madfa'i; 4-16 March 1935) the Party played an opposition role. This time it attempted to rally the tribal shaikhs of the Middle Euphrates to revolt against the government. In order to rally some support for himself, 'Ali Jawdat also formed his own political party, Hizb al-Wahda al-Wataniya (The National Unity Party). The British Ambassador commented:

> The formation of a new party, the party of National Unity was announced. This is intended to be the party of Ali Jaudat's Cabinet. Like previous similar parties it is, in fact, little more than a group of Deputies, and has no organisation outside the Chamber. Its fate will probably be not unlike that of the al-'Ahd al-Iraqi, which was founded by Nuri Sa'id when he became Prime Minister in 1930 and ceased to exist when he resigned the premiership in 1932.[19]

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18. See Chapter X.

19. Ambassador, Baghdad to S/S Foreign Affairs 27.12.34, FO 371/17869/E7699.

The U.S. Legation reported in a similar vein:

> This is scarcely a political party. It is a group composed solely of the supporters of the present Cabinet and its aim is apparently to continue such support. It is hardly expected to survive this session of the Chamber of Deputies.[20]

Naturally, the Party ceased to function when 'Ali Jawdat left the Premiership in 1935.

In March 1935, the various intrigues of Hizb al-Ikha' finally succeeded in securing the opportunity of power for its leaders. The price to pay this time was the formation of a coalition between Yasin al-Hashimi and Rashid 'Ali of the Hizb al-Ikha' (without, importantly, Hikmat Sulaiman) and their two former arch opponents, Nuri al-Sa'id and Ja'far al-'Askari. Yasin completely reversed his vigorous opposition to the 1930 Treaty, and in fact ordered the dissolution of political parties, including the Hizb al-Ikha', on 29 May 1935[21]. al-Hashimi remained in office until October 1936, when he was overthrown by a coup engineered by General Bakr Sidqi with the co-operation of Jama'at al-Ahali. Although formed in 1931, Jama'at al-Ahali did not appear on the political scene until January 1932, when it published its newspaper al-Ahali, which immediately became the most prominent Iraqi daily. Members of the group co-operated actively

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20. Knabenshue to U.S. State Department, 16.12.1934, USNA 890G.00/306.

21. Knabenshue to U.S. State Department, 23.5.1935. USNA 890G.00/341.

in editing it, contributing articles which had a wide influence in Baghdad and other urban centres[22]. The most important members of the group forming the al-Ahali movement who actually edited the paper were four well-educated young Iraqis who believed that it was necessary to improve living standards through social, political and economic reform, and to establish complete independence and establish a democratic system within the country. They called their ideology al-Sha'biya (popularism) which was a combination of socialist and liberal ideologies. It called for reform in the social, political and economic sectors, and State control of industry, agriculture, health and education.

al-Ahali's opposition to the Iraqi political system was based on ideological principles, rather than on personal differences, and its members did not regard politics merely as a ladder to ministerial office. They rejected the political system as it existed and demanded total reform (though not class struggle or revolution) an end to social injustices, and the abolition of exploitation, whether by Iraqis or foreigners.

Through al-Ahali and the books and literature which they had published, Jama'at al-Ahali aimed at educating public opinion and gathering mass support in order to achieve their aims. In 1933-4 they formed two societies to spread their ideas and to make contact with the young

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22. Khadduri, (1960), p.72.

people who aspired to work with them. The first was Jam'iyyat al-Sa'i li Mukafahat al-Ummiya (The Society for Eradicating Illiteracy) whose President was Ja'far Abu al-Timman, and Nadi Baghdad (The Baghdad Club), which was headed by 'Abd al-Fattah Ibrahim. More importantly, Jama'at al-Ahali formed a secret society, Jam'iyyat al-Sha'biya, based on the principles of al-Sha'biya. Its executive committee included Ja'far Abu al-Timman, Hikmat Sulaiman, Kamil al-Chadirchi, Muhammad Hadid, 'Abd al-Fattah Ibrahim and 'Abd al-Qadir Isma'il. Through this society, Bakr Sidqi was contacted by Hikmat Sulaiman and plotted the 1936 coup d'état in which four members held ministerial posts including the Premiership, as will be described in Chapter VI.

Nadi al-Muthanna[23]

In the 1920s and 1930s a new form of nationalism developed in the Arab countries, which saw the Arab world essentially as a single geo-political entity which had been artificially divided by the Western powers after the First World War. The prominent educationalist Sati' al-Husri,

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23. This section is based on interviews with Mahdi Kubba, Siddiq Shanshal and 'Abd al-Razzaq al-Hasani in October 1979. It should be noted that Mahdi Kubba, who was vice-chairman, resigned from the Club in 1934 in protest against the Club's invitation to Nuri al-Sa'id to deliver a speech in an attempt to woo the Pan-Arab nationalists in the army and the country at large, as the most physically powerful political group in Iraq. Batatu's assertion that Mahdi Kubba was the vice-chairman of the Club from 1935 to 1941 (Batatu,1978,p.293) is incorrect. Hence Kubba was not involved with the May 1941 uprising. (Interview with Muhammad Mahdi Kubba, October 1979).

who was Director of Education in Iraq from 1921 to 1929, was a vigorous exponent of the theory of Pan-Arabism and, as has already been mentioned, influenced a whole generation through his nationalist writings, particularly through his contribution to the school text-books of the period, and his lectures and contacts with the students during his long association with the Ministry of Education in different capacities from 1921 to 1941.

The main standardbearers of this ideology in Iraq combined to form Nadi al-Muthanna (The Muthanna Club) in 1935. Though influenced by Sati' al-Husri, the group was deeply impressed by contemporary developments in Italy and Germany, and also reacted against the popularity of what they saw as the 'Iraqist' ideas of Jama'at al-Ahali.

The founders of al-Muthanna Club came from two main ideological strata. First, there were the more traditional Arab nationalists, such as Sa'ib Shawkat (Naji's brother), Sa'id Thabit, and Da'ud al-Sa'di, who had been former associates of King Faisal. The second group consisted of younger and more revolutionary elements such as Mahdi Kubba, Muhammad Hasan Salman and Yunis al-Sab'awi. The latter was the main link between the civilian and military Pan-Arab group. al-Muthanna Club were closely associated with Yasin al-Hashimi until his death in 1936, and in fact were responsible for the death of Bakr Sidqi and the overthrow of Hikmat Sulaiman's government in August 1937. From 1937 to 1941 they dominated Iraqi politics, because of their links with the military and the weakness

of the other factions. In 1946 some of the former members of the Club combined to form the Independence Party (Hizb al-Istiqlal) which was headed by Mahdi Kubba.

The Iraqi Communist Party[24]

Marxist ideas and the influence of the Bolshevik revolution filtered through to Iraq as early as 1920. The first Marxist study circle was formed in Baghdad in 1924, consisting of a group which revolved around Husain al-Rahhal and Mahmud Ahmad al-Sayyid. They published al-Sahifah, and the group was known either by the name of their journal or al-Ruwwad (The Pioneers)[25]. Communist cells were organised in Basra and Nasiriya in 1927 and 1928 as a result of the activities of Pyotr Vasili, a Russian tailor who was also a party functionary[26].

Yusuf Salman Yusuf, known as Fahd, who later became the most famous secretary of the Party, was an early

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24. For the Iraqi Communist Party in this period, see Batata 1978, pp.367-656.

25. See Chapter IV, section III

26. British Intelligence reported this as well: "It is reported that a suspected Soviet agent (Communist functionary) Petros Shamoun Vasili, in 1932 opened a tailor's shop in Nasiriyah (Vasili arrived earlier, probably in 1926) and became the organizer of the Communist cells and activities". AIR 23/589/04914. 21.2.1933.

adherent of Vasili's circle, joining the Nasiriyah and Basrah groups in 1927 and 1928. Communist cells were formed in Baghdad in 1930 but remained inactive, while the Basra and Nasiriyah Communists were busy recruiting more members, working with the peasants, and distributing Communist leaflets, which resulted in arrests in Nasiriyyah in 1933, including Yusuf Salman Yusuf, who was acting as a correspondent for al-Ahali[27]. An Air Ministry despatch reported:

> In the course of search conducted in the house of a communist in Jerusalem several documents, including correspondence for the oriental section of the Comintern were seized. Among the correspondence Yusuf Salman Yusuf was mentioned and his address given.[28]

and subsequently:

> In connection with the Inquiry concerning the Communist man's house in Nasiriyah, Yusuf Salman Yusuf was also arrested and, when questioned, admitted he is a Communist and gave a tirade of the usual type about the "Capitalists" and the "toiling masses".[29]

In March 1934, the Communist Party was founded formally, probably by Fahd, 'Asim Flayyih (a graduate of KUTV), Mahdi Hashim, Yusuf Isma'il (the brother of 'Abd al-Qadir Isma'il, of Jama'at al Ahali) and Zaki Khairi (still a member of the Party's Central Committee).

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27. Interviews with Husain Jamil and 'Abd al-Qadir Isma'il.

28. Air 23/589/04915, Baghdad 4 March 1933.

29. Ibid.

'Asim Flayyih became the secretary of the Party, which now began to distribute leaflets and to organise new members, but its most significant accomplishment was the publication of Kifah al-Sha'b which appeared in July 1935, as the "mouthpiece of the workers and peasants" and as a publication of the Central Committee of the Communist Party.

Between October and December 1935, three leading Communists, 'Asim Flayyih, Zaki Khairi and Mahdi Hashim, were arrested, and as a result Kifah al-Sha'b ceased publication, and the Party's activities came to an end until the coup of October 1936. The Communists supported the coup, and joined Jam'iyyat al-Islah al-Sha'bi (The Popular Reform League), which was in fact a front for Jama'at al-Ahali. However, according to Muhammad Hadid, Batatu's assertion[30] that the Communists worked hand in hand with Jama'at al-Ahali is incorrect: there was no formal co-ordination, and in fact al-Ahali were at pains to disassociate themselves from the Communists. During this period, the Communists made their presence felt and their activities took place on a wider scale, especially among the small working class in Baghdad, Basrah and Kirkuk. The widespread strikes in these towns in 1937 seem to have prompted Bakr Sidqi to denounce Communism. He began a campaign of opposition to the activities of the left in general and the Communists in particular, suppressing

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30. Batatu, 1978, p.439.

the Popular Reform League, stripping the Isma'il brothers of their citizenship, and persecuting other activists. When Bakr Sidqi was assassinated and Hikmat Sulaiman was forced to resign, Jamil al-Madfa'i came to power in August 1937. He took even harsher measures and enacted more severe laws to "combat Communism".

On 30 January 1938, Fahd returned to Iraq, and a new epoch in the history of the Iraqi Communist Party began; he became the dominant figure in the Party until his execution by Nuri al-Sa'id's government in February 1949. He took over the leadership of the Party officially on 29 October 1941, as a result of the arrest of 'Abdullah Mas'ud. Fahd's devotion to the Party and his accomplishment in creating a wide and strongly knit organisation cannot be overestimated[31]. During the second World War a variety of political, social and economic conditions, both local and international, assisted the spread of Communism in Iraq and were important factors behind the Party's growth all over the country. The fact that Germany attacked the Soviet Union in June 1941 and forced it to join the Allies, helped the Iraqi Communists in two ways. First, the security forces relaxed their persecution measures against the Communists and their vigilance on the movement, and instead directed their efforts to root out the nationalist elements

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31. Indeed, at one point while he was absent in Moscow (November 1942) the overwhelming majority of the members deserted him, and he had in effect, on his return, to build again from scratch. Batatu, 1978, p.493.

who had supported the uprising of May 1941. Secondly, the Soviet Union's defence of its territory in the face of German aggression and the international gains for the Communist bloc also assisted the Iraqi Communists. Thus the Iraqi Communist Party supported the Allied war effort, and for the time being considered Britain as an ally and part of the democratic forces in the war of liberation rather than an imperialist enemy[32].

As the war progressed, Fahd gradually strengthened his position within the Party, dominating the first Party Congress held in 1945. The Congress adopted a constitution for the Party (al-Nidham al-Dakhili), and elected a central committee and a politbureau. At this stage membership came largely from the minority communities, particularly Kurds, Christians, and Jews[33]. When Tawfiq al-Suwaidi's government came to power in 1946, the Communists applied for permission to form a legal party under the name of Hizb al-Taharrur al-Watani (The National Liberation Party), but this was refused. However, another Communist front

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32. See Chapter VI, part V. The ICP supported Rashid 'Ali's government in May 1941, but as a result of the German invasion of the Soviet Union changed its whole attitude towards the war. In 1943 The Central Committee admitted that their support of Rashid 'Ali had been a mistake.

33. Gabbay (1978), p.54, and Batatu (1978), pp.519-521.

organisation 'Usba Mukafaha al-Sahyuniyya (The Anti-Zionist League) was permitted to operate. At the end of 1946, however, the period of liberalisation came to an abrupt end with the beginning of the Cold War and the government's evident fear of the spread of Communism within the country. An extensive campaign was set in motion which culminated in the arrest and subsequent execution of the three most prominent Party members in 1949.

The Nature of Iraqi Political Parties, 1932-1946

It will be clear from the discussion that apart from Jama'at al-Ahali and the Communist Party, Iraqi political parties had little in the way of formal organisational structure or coherent ideology. Even Ja'far Abu al-Timman's much respected Hizb al-Watani simply advocated national independence without any concrete proposals for subsequent social or economic reform. Jama'at al-Ahali was the first political organisation to advocate reforms within Iraqi society, and link the issue of internal social change with national independence. It was also original in its rejection of the political status quo within the country, seeking to replace it with a genuine participatory democracy. Other parties were generally simply short-term coalitions of interested individuals, and often dissolved once certain short-term objectives had been achieved.

Furthermore, the traditional political parties did not seek and certainly did not attract a mass membership. Although the two ideological parties had relatively small memberships, they attempted to attract as wide as possible

a following given that they were banned or harassed for most of the period of their existence. They attempted to represent the widest possible cross-section of the population, and with their coming into existence, political opposition took on a new and significant function within Iraqi politics, revolving around issues rather than around personalities.

Chapter IV

The Formation and Ideology of Jama'at al-Ahali

1. Student Activities in Beirut and Baghdad 1923-1930

Jama'at al-Ahali originated among the Iraqi student population of the 1920s, and its founders met and worked closely together while attending schools and colleges in Baghdad and Beirut. The roots of the group go back to the early twenties and sprang from two distinct sources. The first consisted of 'Abd al-Fattah Ibrahim, Muhammad Hadid, 'Ali Haidar Sulaiman and their friends who had studied together at the American University of Beirut[1], while the second consisted of Husain Jamil, 'Abd al-Qadir Isma'il and their friends and classmates 'Aziz Sharif, Jamil 'Abd al-Wahhab, Khalil Kanna, Isma'il al-Ghanim and Hasan al-Talibani, all of whom studied at the Baghdad School of Law, and, except for Husain Jamil, graduated from it[2]. Furthermore, Husain Jamil and 'Abd al-Qadir Isma'il went to secondary school together and led the school strike in 1926.

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1. Information on the activities of Iraqi students in Beirut is based mainly on numerous interviews with 'Abd al-Fattah Ibrahim and Muhammad Hadid in Baghdad and London in August 1976, June-July 1978, and October 1979.

2. The activities of the Baghdad group were described by 'Abd al-Qadir Isma'il in Baghdad June-July 1978 and in numerous interviews and written answers from Husain Jamil in Baghdad and London between 1976 and 1979.

When Sati' al-Husri was appointed Director-General of the Ministry of Education in the first years of the Iraq state the government adopted a policy of financing secondary school graduates to study in Lebanon, Egypt, England and the U.S.A. At that time there were few higher education institutions in Iraq, and an acute shortage of secondary school teachers[3]. Thus, in September 1923, 'Abd al-Fattah Ibrahim went to Beirut to study modern history at the American University. At the same time, Muhammad Hadid arrived in Beirut to continue his secondary school education at a school adjoining the University. That same academic year, several more Iraqi students also commenced studying on government scholarships. Among them were Jamil Tuma, Darwish al-Haidari, the nephew of Nasrat al-Farisi, and Nuri Rufa'il. They were joined the following year by 'Ali Haidar Sulaiman, 'Abdullah Bakr and some two years later by Hashim Jawad[4].

During the academic year 1924-25 there were over 50 Iraqi students at the American University of Beirut[5]. They decided to form an Iraqi Student Association along the lines of other societies at the University, electing Yusuf Zainal president and Ibrahim vice-president. Ibrahim says

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3. al-Husri, Sati', Mudhakarrati fi al-'Iraq 1921-41, (My memoirs in Iraq 1921-1941),(Beirut 1967),p.35.

4. al-Mallah,'A., Tarikh al-Haraka al-Dimuqratiya fi al-'Iraq fi Nisf Qarn (History of the Democratic Movement in 'Iraq over half a century). Baghdad 1975, p.123.

5. al-Hilali,'A., "Lamhat Tarikhiya 'an al-Dirasa al-'Ilmiya fi'l-Kharij" (Historical aspects of Academic study abroad 1922-32), Afaq 'Arabiya, vol.IV,No.1, March 1979, p.20.

that the main purpose of the Association was"to discuss the socio-political situation in Iraq and other Arab countries and to dissuade the students from over-indulgence in Beirut's night life". In 1925, the more active among the students also formed Jam'iyyat al-Nash' al-Iraqi (Iraqi Youth Club) outside the University, since University regulations forbade political associations, activities and debates on campus. Zainal was elected president and in this capacity sent a telegram to the Iraqi Government protesting against the Oil Agreement signed between Iraq and the T.P.C. in 1926.

At the end of 1926, when Zainal graduated and returned to Iraq, Ibrahim became the president of both the Club and the Association. The students closely followed political developments in Iraq, but tended to remain isolated from Lebanese politics., To a certain extent this reflected the ideology of 'Abd al-Fattah Ibrahim, Muhammad Hadid and 'Ali Haidar Sulaiman, who were more interested in Iraqi affairs than in the wider spectrum of Arab nationalist politics. During their years in Beirut, the latter three became close friends, sharing similar political beliefs which ultimately were to find expression in the formation of Jama'at al-Ahali.

However, perhaps more significant than the activities of Ibrahim, Hadid and Sulaiman in the students' Association and the youth club was the formation of a secret organisation

on a cell basis, whose members held regular meetings and paid monthly membership dues. The principal cell included Yusuf Zainal, Nuri Rufa'il, Darwish al-Haidari and 'Abd al-Fattah Ibrahim, who in his turn was responsible for a cell which included Hadid, Sulaiman and Jamil Tuma[6]. The organisation opposed the Iraq Government and pledged to work towards the country's independence by pressing for the removal of Britain and British influence from the country. It also undertook to work towards improving the standard of living of the people of Iraq. Meetings took the form of educational sessions in which members discussed various political ideologies and conditions in Iraq, naturally emphasising the necessity to continue their work when they returned home. Ibrahim recollects the group's early admiration for Mussolini, whom they considered the liberator of his country. Eventually, allegations that some members were informing the government of the activities of Ibrahim and his group created a split within the students' society, and when Ibrahim returned to Iraq in 1928, the students' society and the Youth Club closed down.

Student Activities in Baghdad 1926-1930

The Baghdad section of Jama'at al-Ahali consisted principally of Husain Jamil and 'Abd al-Qadir Isma'il, who met and became close friends in 1924 while still pupils at

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6. After returning to Iraq, Jamil Tuma was described as being "interested in Communism and Bolshevism", while 'Ali Haidar Sulaiman was described as "dabbling in Communism". Air 23/589/04914 11.3.1933.

al-Markaziya secondary school. During their school years, the two were involved in the student strike of 1926, the al-Nusuli affair, the demonstration against the visit of Sir Alfred Mond to Baghdad in 1928, and the opposition to the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1930. At the time of the negotiations over the 1926 Anglo-Iraq Treaty and the oil concessions with the Turkish Petroleum Company, there were widespread public protests and eighteen members of parliament boycotted the discussions on the Treaty[7]. Nevertheless, the Treaty was soon signed and ratified by the government since it was clear that there could be no serious resistance to British demands[8]. For some time the Treaty was the subject of heated discussions in cafes, mosques and schools.

At this time, an English teacher at al-Markaziya secondary school told his class,which included Jamil and Isma'il that the Iraqi people were stupid for not welcoming the Treaty, because the British wanted them to become 'civilized' and it was their 'ignorance' which prevented them from appreciating what Britain was trying to achieve. He went on to describe the leaders of the opposition and their supporters as 'fools and donkeys'. These insults enraged the pupils, especially Isma'il and Jamil, who

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7. Mahadhir al-Majlis al-Niyabi, (Proceedings of the Chamber of Deputies),1926, first session, 12th meeting, p.10. Quoted al-'Umar,F. al-Mu'ahadat al-Iraqiya al-Britaniya wa Atharuha fi al-Siyasa al-Dakhiliya (The Iraqi-British Treaties and their effect on internal politics),(Baghdad 1977),p.162.

8. Sluglett, 1976, pp.130-31.

pressed their classmates to submit letters of protest to the headmaster and the Ministry of Education. They then urged the other pupils to boycott the teacher's classes, and eventually went on strike and refused to attend any classes at all. Isma'il and Jamil discussed the issue with other teachers in the school who responded sympathetically, and as a result the headmaster asked the Ministry to remove the offending teacher, who was subsequently transferred. The success of this incident encouraged Jamil and Isma'il to become more involved in political issues.

The Nusuli Affair

In 1924 the government had recruited a number of Syrian and Lebanese graduates to teach in al-Markaziya secondary school in Baghdad, including Anis al-Nusuli, who taught history[9]. In 1926, al-Nusuli published a book entitled al-Dawla al-Ummawiya fi'l-Sham, (The Ummayad State in Syria) which aroused unfavourable attention because of its apparently insulting reference to Shi'i religious tradition. Furthermore, the recruitment of other Arabs to jobs in Iraq was very unpopular, which added a special dimension to criticism of the book[10]. Thus in February 1927,

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9. al-Husri, 1967, p.557.

10. Further indignation was caused by the dedication of the book, which read: "Who deserves the history of the Ummayads more than the sons of the Ummayads? Who deserves the history of Mu'awiya and al-Walid more than the sons of Mu'awiya and al-Walid? So, sons of Independent and United Syria, accept this simple work". Ibid., pp.558-9.

the Minister of Education, who was a Shi'i and also hostile to the Director-General of Education, Sati' al-Husri, ordered that al-Nusuli should be sacked and expelled from the country, and the sale of his book prohibited.

The secondary school pupils held a huge protest demonstration together with the students at the Teachers Training College, led by Jamil, Isma'il and others. They marched through the streets of Baghdad complaining at the dismissal of al-Nusuli and demanding freedom of thought and research. The teachers of both institutions submitted a letter of protest to the Prime Minister and the Minister of Education.

The demonstration elected a delegation of four students, including Husain Jamil, and a Shi'i student, Muhammad Hasan Salman, but the Minister of Education refused to meet them. The police intervened, and a violent confrontation resulted. The students finally dispersed at the request of their popular teacher, Yusuf Zainal[11]. In retaliation, the Minister of Education dismissed all the Syrian teachers who had supported al-Nusuli, and ordered his British adviser to form a committee to investigate the student demonstration and the attack on the police. The Committee decided to expel four students, including Jamil and Fa'iq al-Samarra'i, for leading the demonstration and attacking the police. Seven students, including Isma'il, were suspended for one month, eleven were suspended for two weeks, and six others received a warning letter. Those expelled sent a petition (which was published in some of

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11. For more details see al-Mallah, 1975, p.81 and al-'Akkam, 1975, p.222.

the Baghdad daily papers[12]) to the King, the Prime Minister, and the Minister of Education, stating that they had been unfairly treated and demanding their reinstatement. The fate of the students was subsequently discussed in the Chamber of Deputies, and a month later they were allowed to return to their schools. Jamil attributed this to public pressure, but al-Husri maintained that it was because of his influence with the King.

The al-Nusuli affair was a turning point in Iraqi student politics. The demonstration, which was one of the largest and best organised ever held in Baghdad, and the fact that the government gave way under popular pressure, showed the new strength of the movement, and encouraged wider student participation in national and international issues.

The Demonstration Against Sir Alfred Mond, 1928

The restlessness of the political climate in 1927 was evident in the al-Nusuli demonstration, the Kadhimain riots, the elections and the resignation of the cabinet. This continued into 1928, when a demonstration which turned into a riot took place at the funeral of Shaikh Dhari, one of the heroes of the 1920 revolution. Dhari had been charged with the murder of a British officer, Colonel Leachman, and had been in hiding for almost seven years until his arrest in 1927. He was condemned to death, but because of his ill health and notoriety the sentence had been reduced to

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12. al-'Umari,K., Hikayat Siyasiya Min Tarikh al-'Iraq al-Hadith (Political anecdotes from Modern Iraqi History), Cairo 1969, p.162.

life imprisonment. At the end of January 1928, it was announced that Sir Alfred Mond, who was director and chairman of several major British companies, in particular Imperial Chemical Industries, would visit Iraq. A leading Zionist, he was also the chairman of the Economic Board of Palestine[13]. King Faisal had known Mond in England, and it was rumoured that he had been invited by the King to discuss various projects, notably the proposal to build an oil pipeline connecting Iraq with the Mediterranean[14].

Some of those who had taken part in the al-Nusuli demonstration began meeting at the Nadi al-Tadhamun (The Solidarity Club)[15]. When they heard of Mond's proposed visit, they were, in Husain Jamil's words "shocked at the idea that a Zionist leader would visit Iraq and would extend his political and commercial activities within the country". They decided to prevent Mond and his party from entering Baghdad by organising a huge demonstration to meet them on the outskirts of the capital. Jamil, Isma'il and others made contact with students at the College of Law,

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13. Who was Who, 1929-1940 (London 1941), p.928.

14. Mushtaq, T. Awraq Ayyami 1900-1958, (Memoirs 1900-1958), (Beirut 1968), p.188., and al-Mallah,1975,p.83.

15. Batatu, 1978, p.398, says that al-Tadhamin Club was founded by Husain al-Rahhal and Yusuf Zainal, and that the former was the moving force behind it. The founders of Jama'at al-Ahali do not share this view and emphasise that Zainal was the real catalyst.

where they were both students, and at the Teachers Training College and Secondary School. They also prepared banners and slogans for the demonstration[16].

On the day that Mond was scheduled to arrive from Damascus, the students began to assemble near the Maude Bridge as planned, and they were joined by a huge crowd, bringing the number present to about 20,000[17]. They marched through the right bank district of Baghdad and stopped at the junction of the road from Damascus waiting for Mond's party to arrive. The demonstrators checked every passing car and shouted anti-Zionist slogans, while the police tried unsuccessfully to break up the demonstration. Realising the critical nature of the situation the authorities sent the Commissioner of Police with an armed contingent to meet Mond and his party, and led them safely and secretly to the High Commissioner's residence[18]. Meanwhile, the demonstrators waited until dark and when word spread that Mond's route had been changed because of the demonstration, the crowd marched back to the capital cheering their success in having foiled the visit and in having beaten off attempts by the police to disperse them. Many were injured and arrested, including

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16. Jamil and Isma'il took materials to a calligrapher named Jalal whose shop was opposite the Baghdad police headquarters, to inscribe the banners. When they picked them up, it is very possible that they were noticed by the police.

17. al-Hasani,(1974), Vol.2, p.150.

18. Reuters telegram, INA, File No. D/6/3, 1927-29, No.51.

Husain al-Rahhal and Zaki Khairi, early adherents of Marxism, and 'Abd al-Qadir Isma'il, who became one of the founders of Jama'at al-Ahali.

News of the demonstration soon spread throughout Iraq and the Arab world, and was accurately reported by Reuters. The demonstration infuriated and embarrassed the British High Commissioner. He sent a copy of the Reuters' telegram to the King, the Prime Minister, and the Ministers of Interior and Education, pointing out that the demonstrations had damaged Iraq's reputation in Europe and the civilized world, emphasising the necessity to prevent any recurrence in the future[19]. When the King and the Prime Minister met the High Commissioner, they complained that they had not been informed of what was going on, although the C.I.D. had been aware early in the day that the al-Tadhamun Club was planning some form of protest[20]. The High Commissioner in his turn criticised the police's handling of the demonstration[21].

The authorities reacted swiftly without waiting for the High Commissioner's instructions; Nadi al-Tadhamun was raided and closed and its founder, Yusuf Zainal, was banished to al-Fao in the south of Iraq[22]. The headmasters and teachers in Baghdad met the Minister of Education, Tawfiq al-Suwaidi, who threatened that firearms would be used to suppress any further disturbances. The Ministry

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19. Ibid., No.52 of 11.2.1928.

20. Ibid., No.49, Bourdillon to Ministry of the Interior of 10.2.1928.

21. Ibid.

22. al-'Akkam,(1975),p.289 and al-Hasani,(1974),Vol.2,p.150.

of the Interior issued an order expelling eighteen students from their schools (including Jamil, Isma'il, 'Aziz Sharif, and Adham Mushtaq), suspending six students for one month and three others for one week, and laws were introduced to deal with this and future demonstrations. Even the King, who felt that the existing laws were "sufficient to deal with such incidents" accused the cabinet of over-reacting[23]. The students petitioned the government with the support of the opposition Deputies[24] who defended the students and accused the government of preventing the expression of national sentiment[25]. The government reluctantly reinstated the students in the next academic year[26].

All in all, the students felt that they had won the day, since they had in fact succeeded in restricting Mond's movements in Baghdad, and subsequently forced the government to reinstate them in their schools. The incident gained them widespread support and was an important

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23. INA File No. D/6/3 No.45 (The King's remarks to the Cabinet). These were Laws 13 and 14 of 1928, which were introduced to the Cabinet by the Adviser to the Ministry of Justice without the previous knowledge or consent of the Minister, Hikmat Sulaiman. Sulaiman threatened to resign in protest and was only persuaded to remain in office by a decision to make the Ministry of Interior responsible for the implementation of the laws.

24. al-'Alam al-'Arabi, 17.2.1928, quoted al-'Akkam,1975,p.297.

25. The deputies who spoke on behalf of the students were Ja'far Abu al-Timman, Yasin al-Hashimi, Rashid 'Ali al-Gailani, Mahmud Ramiz and Mahmud Subhi al-Daftari. Mahadhir al-Majlis al-Niyabi, 1928, pp.26-28.

26. al-Mallah, 1975, p.86. Jamil left for Damascus right away, and was helped by the Syrian nationalists to enroll at the Law School, so he did not miss that academic year.

landmark in the growth of popular opposition to the political system in Iraq. It pushed students to the very centre of the opposition and was a vital catalyst in the future formation of Jama'at al-Ahali. In particular, it strengthened Jamil and Isma'il's patriotic beliefs and prepared many more students for future involvement in politics.

The Opposition to the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1930

On the 30th June 1930, Nuri al-Sa'id and Sir Francis Humphrys signed a Treaty which was to signify the formal ending of the mandate. The Treaty was made public on 18 July[27], Nuri having left for London on 1 July to continue financial negotiations. The announcement of the Treaty "caused little rejoicing in Baghdad"[28] where "the ultra nationalist politicians hailed it as a mere continuance of slavery"[29] The opposition, although fragmented, denounced the Treaty, criticised it in the press and the two opposition parties, al-Hizb al-Ikha' al-Watani and al-Hizb al-Watani, led by Yasin al-Hashimi and Ja'far Abu al-Timman, declared the Treaty unacceptable and protested to the King of Iraq and the heads of foreign countries. They also sent a telegram to the Permanent Mandates Commission of the League of Nations threatening a boycott of the elections[30].

Here we shall concentrate mainly on the students' role

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27. The Director of Publishing distributed the text of the Treaty to the newspapers and ordered them to publish it with no comment.

28. Sluglett, 1976, p.182.

29. Longrigg, 1958, p.183.

30. For more details of the opposition see al-'Umari, K., 1969, pp.343-347.

in the opposition. In order to ensure the ratification of the Treaty in Parliament, new elections were to be held between 10 July and 10 November. Along with the other opposition leaders, Abu al-Timman decided to boycott the elections[31]. During that period Husain Jamil graduated from Damascus Law School and returned to Baghdad to find the political atmosphere extremely tense. He contacted 'Abd al-Qadir Isma'il, who was in his last year at the Baghdad Law School, and a number of other politically active students. They decided to publish a leaflet (bayan) supporting Abu al-Timman, urging a boycott of the elections by asking people not to co-operate with a government which was attempting, in the pamphlet's own words, to create a "tool in the hands of the Colonial powers in order to achieve their aims in a pseudo-legal fashion". The bayan praised Abu al-Timman, and urged the people and the politicians to support him. It was signed by 'Abd al-Qadir Isma'il, Husain Jamil, Yunis al-Sab'awi, Fa'iq al-Samarra'i, Khalil Kanna, 'Aziz Sharif and Sadiq Habba[32].

Through its paper, al-Hizb al-Watani called on the people to boycott the elections, and this appeal found a positive response in different parts of the country[33]. Isma'il and his fellow activists applied to the governorate

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31. INA, File No. D/6/2, Nos.25-29, The Treaty of 1930. For more details on the role of Ja'far Abu al-Timman in Iraqi politics see al-Daraji (1976).

32. al-Bilad, 20.7.1930, Quoted al-Daraji (1976), p.290. Almost all these persons went on to play a prominent part in Iraqi politics either in government or opposition.

33. Sada al-Istiqlal, 15.9.1930, quoted al-Daraji (1976), p.291.

of Baghdad for a permit to hold a protest meeting in the centre of the Capital[34]. At the same time they printed another leaflet (bayan) which they distributed and displayed on walls all over the city. This bayan attributed the ills which existed in Iraq to Britain and her local supporters who controlled the government. It asked everyone to stop work and to attend the protest meeting which was to be followed by a peaceful demonstration. Despite the authorities' refusal to grant a permit a large crowd converged on the place of the meeting on the afternoon of 22nd September. The police locked the hall and ordered the crowd to disperse, but they refused, marching to the headquarters of al-Hizb al-Watani to show their support for Abu al-Timman. They then assembled at the Haidarkhana Mosque, a traditional focus of protest meetings, where they were attacked by the police and many arrests were made. Later, the police rounded up those who had signed the petition, and they were tried by the Baghdad Criminal Court in November. 'Abd al-Qadir Isma'il, Yunis al-Sab'awi, Jamil 'Abd al-Wahhab, Khalil Kanna and Fa'iq al-Samarra'i were given six months imprisonment, Ahmad Qasim Raji and Salim Zalluf, three. Husain Jamil and 'Umar Khulusi were acquitted[35], and 'Aziz Sharif went into hiding to avoid arrest.

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34. The application for the permit was signed by 'Abd al-Qadir Isma'il, Yunis al-Sab'awi, Jamil 'Abd al-Wahhab, Fa'iq al-Samarra'i, Khalil Kanna, 'Umar Khulusi, Ahmad Qassim Raji and Salim Zalluf. al-Hasani (1974), Vol.3, p.74. Jamil did not sign the application because he had already submitted an application to publish a newspaper. Interview with Jamil.

35. For the complete sentences, see Bayat, S., al-Qadha' al-Jina'i al-Iraqi (Iraqi Criminal Proceedings) Vol.1, Baghdad, 1947, pp.107-109. Jamil thinks he was acquitted because he did not sign the petition, although he took part in the demonstration.

On appeal, the sentences were reduced and since the defendants had already been held for several weeks, they were immediately released. Ja'far Abu al-Timman, Yasin al-Hashimi and Naji al-Suwaidi all took part in the campaign against the sentences in their newspapers, in parliament and by writing petitions to the King .

A year after leaving prison, 'Abd al-Qadir Isma'il graduated from Baghdad Law School. Husain Jamil had already graduated from Damascus, and in 1931 they both began to look for an office to practice law. Their first involvement in political activities after graduation was in the strike against the Municipal Tax Law of 1931. Isma'il knew Ja'far Abu al-Timman and Muhammad Salih al-Qazzaz, the president of Jam'iyyat Ashab al-Sana'i (The Artisans' Association). During the strike he acted as a co-ordinator and advisor to the leaders of the strike. He and Jamil worked hard to gather popular support for the strike as well as trying to involve their own friends, other lawyers and students. When the leaders of the strike were arrested and put on trial, Husain Jamil was one of the five lawyers who volunteered to defend them.

2. The Founders: Early Contacts[1]

It has been mentioned earlier that three of the four founders completed their higher education abroad. 'Abd al-Qadir Isma'il was the only one to remain in Iraq until his graduation from Baghdad Law School in June 1931, a year after Husain Jamil had finished his law degree in Damascus. Jamil then returned to Baghdad, renewing his contacts with his former classmates and especially his friendship with Isma'il. Thereafter, the two met regularly to discuss the political situation in Iraq and their plans for the future. They seemed to have agreed on most major issues and also shared the same drive to achieve their ambitions. They decided that there was a deeply felt need for a newspaper which would be ideological rather than commercial, and since no existing newspaper satisfied their political beliefs or even approached them, they decided to publish one of their own.

Jamil and Isma'il had already helped to manage and edit various journals and periodicals, and had written articles and short stories[2]. Since they maintained a continuous and almost obsessional interest in Iraqi politics, and they had no interest in government employment, it was natural that they should seek to publish a paper which

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1. This section is based mainly on numerous interviews with the four founders of Jama'at al-Ahali, 'Abd al-Fattah Ibraham, Muhammad Hadid, 'Abd al-Qadir Isma'il and Husain Jamil, between 1976 and 1979.

2. For details of Jamil's and Isma'il's experience, see their background. (Appendix B).

would reflect and disseminate their views. They felt it to be their duty to revive national feeling, or in Jamil's words, "to lead our countrymen along the road to independence, democracy, freedom and equality", although this proved considerably more difficult than they anticipated.

In 1931, 'Abd al-Fattah Ibrahim returned from the United States, after spending a year at Columbia University studying for an M.A. in International Relations which he did not complete. He had finished his B.A. in history at the American University of Beirut in 1928, and had devoted much of his time to the study of political doctrines and ideologies, as well as being involved in various political activities. He was, and still is, a serious and meticulous person. Isma'il, who was related to him by marriage, contacted him to tell him about the newspaper venture he was planning with Jamil. Ibrahim reacted favourably, and a meeting was arranged.

Ibrahim found the two other young men, who were three years his junior, somewhat simple and unpolished. They seemed to think that Iraq was the only country in the world, and were obsessed with the British presence to the virtual exclusion of everything else. For his part, Ibrahim promised to provide the support of his friends and former classmates at A.U.B., including Nuri Rufa'il, Jamil Tuma, 'Ali Haidar Sulaiman, Ibrahim Baithun and 'Abdullah Bakr. In particular, Ibrahim was eagerly awaiting the return from the London School of Economics

of Muhammad Hadid, with whom he had formed closer ties in Beirut. Both had similar characters, and shared the same political ideas. Ibrahim knew he could work well with Hadid, and with him in the group they could form a balanced partnership; Ibrahim would be the ideologist, Hadid the strategist, Jamil the journalist and Isma'il the activist. With such talent, the newspaper began to seem a viable possibility. In fact, Hadid returned to Baghdad in October 1931 and was immediately approached by 'Abd al-Fattah Ibrahim who informed him of the project. Hadid agreed and met with the rest of the group to discuss various general aspects of the project. Jamil had already applied for a permit to publish a newspaper, and the government had approved. After several meetings they agreed on a set of basic ideological principles, which they called al-Sha'biya (Popularism). They decided to call their newspaper al-Ahali, and from the time of its newspaper's appearance in January 1932, the group became known as Jama'at al-Ahali.[3]

In July 1931, Husain Jamil was granted a permit by the Ministry of the Interior to publish the newspaper. He had chosen the name al-Ahali for the newspaper for three main reasons. First, al-Ahali means "the people", which implied that the paper took the side of "the people" against the existing newspapers which generally took the side of the government. Secondly, the name contrasted with

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3. See Appendix B.

the names of other contemporary papers such as al-Watan (homeland, patrie) or al-Bilad (country, territory). Finally, it showed the group's admiration for the Egyptian Wafd party, which also published an al-Ahali newspaper edited by 'Abd al-Qadir Hamza[4]. The four founders held regular meetings to establish the principles which their newspaper was to follow. They agreed on a statement of principle, Minhaj al-Sha'biya (the programme of Popularism). It was agreed that the paper should concentrate on achieving true democracy and national independence for Iraq, fostering economic and social reform within the country, and supporting anti-colonial and national liberation movements in other countries. Also the paper would reflect popular sentiments and aspirations for a better life. After agreeing on what Jamil described as "these major ideological points", the group embarked on the practical side of setting up a newspaper. First they needed the capital to buy a press and rent premises as they had decided to be completely independent. However, they soon found that even by pooling their capital they did not have enough to buy a press and newsprint, rent premises and hire workers. It was then suggested that they should encourage possible sympathisers to invest money in the movement in the form of shares, and to make the newspaper into a commercial enterprise, on the condition that this would not permit any interference

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4. The Egyptian writer and thinker, Salama Musa, who was a powerful influence on members of the group, had also published a newspaper called al-Ahali in 1919.

in the paper's policy, direction or conduct on the part of the other shareholders. Thus, Ibrahim Baithun and Khalil Kanna were invited to contribute and later, Darwish al-Haidari, Nasrat al-Farisi (who asked that his name should not be mentioned), and Haqqi al-Chaibaji[5]. Finally, they brought a broken-down press, and agreed to start publication on 1 January 1932. However, on 31 December the press broke down and they were forced to postpone publication until the next day, the 2nd of January, only one day before the expiry of their permit.

The significance of the newspaper and its influence on Iraqi political life can hardly be exaggerated. It signalled the emergence of a new political trend, directed by a group of young men with new ideas and approaches to politics, society and the economy. The appearance of al-Ahali was of an importance and significance shared according to one writer, by "no other newspaper in the whole of the Arab world", for it was not simply an end in itself, but the means of spreading progressive ideas in a backward society[6]. As well as being"a thorn in the side of the government"[7], al-Ahali established itself as "the spokesman of all revolutionary, patriotic and progressive forces in

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5. According to al-Chadirchi the shares were divided as follows: 28 shares to 'Abd al-Fattah Ibrahim, 20 to Husain Jamil, 13.1/2 to 'Abd al-Qadir Isma'il, 10 to Ibrahim Baithun, 5 to Khalil Kanna, 3 to Nasrat al-Farisi, 2 to Darwish al-Haidari, and one to Haqqi al-Chaipachi. Mudhakkarat Kamil al-Chadirchi (The Memoirs of Kamil al-Chadirchi),(Beirut 1970), p.23.
6. Khalil,M.Y., (1974), p.173.
7. Knabenshue to State Department, 16.7.1932, USNA 890 G.00/209.

in Iraq"[8] and became the most prominent daily paper in the country[9]. This did not come about because of a shortage of other newspapers or as a coincidence, or simply because it was an opposition paper, but rather because it consistently maintained high standards in editorials, reporting and investigation. More important, it reflected popular feelings and demands, and expressed widely held aspirations for a better life and a more representative government. From its first issue on 2nd January 1932, until the end of the period of study in 1946, al-Ahali and its successor Sawt al-Ahali, went through many owners and editors. Although suppressed many times and not published for many years, it remained highly respected. Generally speaking, it kept to a fairly consistent style and content, although it went through different phases affecting its course of action and approach, which will be discussed in Part III.

Because of the uniqueness and significance of the first issue of al-Ahali, which contained a statement of the objectives, it is useful to describe it in some detail. Alongside the paper's name appeared the words "a universal political daily newspaper, published by a team of young people"[10]. A flaming torch[11] appears next to the traditional headline, which read "the good of the people

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8. Vitol, F., The Coup d'état government in Iraq. The Revolutionary East (Moscow 1937) (Translated into Arabic in al-Thaqafa al-Jadida, Baghdad June 1971, p.58).
9. Khadduri, M. (1960), p.70.
10. al-Ahali, 2.1.1932.
11. The symbol of the flaming torch was used by al-Ahali and always placed next to the title on editorial page. It was copied from al-'Usur, an Egyptian magazine edited by Ismail Mudhir, whose writings influenced the thinking of Jamil, Isma'il and Hadid. Interview with Jamil.

above every other good: our paper is the people's paper, it sees their welfare above all other goals". It defined the people's welfare as:

> ... everything which is useful and beneficial to the majority of the citizens of this country, such as the improvement of the standard of living, the achievement of material and spiritual security, the establishment of a stable and healthy political and economic order, the utilisation of the population's intellectual talents and its economic and other resources for the people's maximum benefit.
> In order to create this, the country needs individuals who are prepared to work unostentatiously and derive their happiness and satisfaction from this struggle rather than in palaces and wealth. These are the young people with firm beliefs and clear objectives who are prepared to devote their lives to the service of their people in all spheres of political, ideological and economic activity to achieve the goals for which the paper has been published.
> We at this newspaper do not support any existing political party. We follow our own free will and support what we believe to be beneficial to the majority and the common good. But this in no way implies any hatred or resentment towards other parties ... we are after the truth wherever it is and we devote this paper to the cause of truth.
> We are publishing this paper because we appreciate the importance of journalism and its great influence. We recognise that newspapers can function as a school for society, developing individuals all through their lives, enlightening them and showing them the right way as well as misleading them. Newspapers can be the means either of building up or of ruining a society. Hence the people have the right to demand that newspaper publishers should be unselfish, and believe that their duty is to serve the country, having truth and frankness as the motto of their profession.[12]

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12. al-Ahali, 2. January 1932.

In the same issue, on page 3, the paper further clarified its identity and objectives. In seeking to find a cure for the present backward condition of society, the paper declared its purpose to be the publication of daily events and foreign news, to discuss modern thoughts and ideas, and to translate and summarise the works of modern philosophers and contemporary writers[13]. Until the middle of 1937 it had six pages, but between 1942-46, only four. Special sections were devoted to various different sectors of society, particularly labour, youth, women and literature.

Another important section, "News from all parts of Iraq" concentrated on the needs and complaints of the people, particularly in the poverty-stricken country areas. It showed the appalling living conditions of the rural poor and the injustices inflicted upon them by their shaikhs and corrupt government officials. Such information was provided by volunteer correspondents from all over Iraq, of whom one of the most famous was the reporter from Nasiriya, Yusuf Salman Yusuf (Fahad), later the general secretary of the Iraqi Communist Party[14]. At least one page was devoted to a section called "Latest Telegrams and Cables" which carried the latest news from around the world, concentrating particularly on the plight of oppressed peoples, revolutionary struggles for independence by National Liberation movements against repressive systems such as the Indian struggle against British rule,

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13. Ibid.

14. Interview with Husain Jamil and 'Abd al-Qadir Isma'il.

and the progress, development and achievements of the Soviet Union.

About half a page was devoted to the Arab countries. This brought news of the fight against Zionism and colonialism in Syria, Egypt, North Africa and Palestine, and also reported evidence of democratic progress in Egypt and Syria in the context of the development of political parties and parliamentary institutions. Another half page was devoted to 'Reformist Turkey and Iran', emphasising the progress achieved and reforms undertaken by both countries. A further section was devoted to various economic theories, giving an analysis of world economic conditions generally, and in the context of Iraq's own economic conditions and problems. There was also a health section which was concerned with public health matters and common diseases.

Although Jama'at al-Ahali worked together on the production of the paper, different individuals supervised different sections, although their names were not mentioned. Isma'il lived in the same building as the newspaper which made him in effect the resident manager. He supervised overall day to day control of the technical side of production, besides writing and editing the "Story for Today". His brother Yusuf Isma'il was editor of the telegrams and cables section, while 'Abd al-Fattah Ibrahim was responsible for the sociological, historical and political articles, which concentrated on ideological

interpretations of popularism and the translation of various articles and books, as well as contributing to the editorial. Hadid concentrated on economics and finance, in addition to translations, while 'Ali Haidar Sulaiman contributed historical and political articles and critiques under the pen-name Shamali (a Northerner), or "The Young Historian". Jamil helped to manage the paper, and acted as an editor, also writing on legal and public affairs. Kamil al-Chadirchi took over most of these tasks when Jamil left in June 1932.

There was an unofficial editorial committee composed of the founders (Ibrahim, Hadid, Isma'il and Jamil) and later al-Chadirchi. They suggested appropriate topics which the group would analyse and try to clarify, and the main editorial would then be assigned to one of them. After writing, the piece was normally looked over or corrected by one or more of the group. The editorials were always clearly and precisely written according to a method which never changed. A long and obvious title indicated the subject, and then the body of the article stated the problems, the analysis and other aspects before suggesting a solution. Nothing was superfluous or exaggerated in the writing, in contrast to most of the writing of the time. In fact, it is not until comparatively recently that the use of rhetoric has begun to be omitted in some Arabic journals. Another new practice was that of omitting the names of contributors, which was already well known from the British press, particularly from The Times.

This was particularly suited to al-Ahali's purposes; if the writers were anonymous, the government did not know who they were, which protected government employees like Ibrahim and Hadid from prosecution. It also encouraged aspiring writers to contribute articles to the paper without fear or being found out and possibly being persecuted, losing their jobs or being transferred to some remote part of the country.

al-Ahali newspaper was thus patriotic, in opposition to the government, oriented towards socialism and generally progressive and educational in nature. It always remained in contact with popular aspirations, yet it was also fairly sophisticated, possibly too much so for the majority of its readership. However, it always attempted to explain political systems and ideologies, and simplify terms in order to make for easier and more digestible reading. The Story for Today, sometimes part of the literature and art page, was another prominent feature. The stories were generally fictional but they were an accurate reflection of social, economic and political conditions in Iraq, showing the suffering of the workers and contrasting this with the idle and unproductive lifestyle of the upper classes. Also progressive writers such as Abdullah Jaddu', Lufti Bakr Sidqi, Husain al-Rahhal, 'Abd al-Wahhab al-Amin, Qasim Hasan, Mustafa 'Ali and Yusuf Matti, 'Abd al-Qadir Isma'il also wrote many short stories for the newspaper. In addition, it published translations of the works of

international writers like Tolstoy, Maupassant, Shaw, Goethe, Gorki and Chekhov. From the very first time there were studies of the development of various schools of political thought and ideology, which explained and analysed the characteristics of each one, as well as translations of biographies of national leaders such as Gandhi, Nehru, Lenin and Stalin.

3. The Principal Influences on the Ideology of Jama'at al-Ahali

On 8 October 1932, al-Ahali carried an editorial which pointed out that the ideology of al-Sha'biya was a combination of and selection from a number of different ideologies. The article continued:

> It is wrong to follow one single ideology or principle, neglecting useful features of other ideologies. It is our duty to create our own road to follow in dealing with our own political and social conditions.[1]

In what follows we will look into the ideologies which influenced members of al-Ahali and also their debt to a number of contemporary political figures. We must also consider the effect of the atmosphere in which the founders of al-Ahali lived, whether in Baghdad, Beirut, Damascus, London or New York. In order to understand the various influences more clearly we will attempt to divide the spheres of influence into three loose categories, local, Arab (mostly Egyptian) and international.

Local Influences

A progressive socialist circle first began to meet in Baghdad in the early 1920s to discuss Marxism and Socialism. The group was known as al-Ruwwad (The Pioneers)[2] and their founder was Husain al-Rahhal, who had returned to Iraq after spending some six years in Europe between 1913 and 1919, mainly in Germany where he witnessed the Spartacist rising.

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1. al-Ahali, 8.10.1932.

2. Interview with Jamil and Isma'il, also al-Rawi, A.L., "al-Mukawinat al-'Ula lil-Fikr al-Ishtiraki fi al-Iraq" (The early formation of socialist thought in Iraq). al-Thaqafa al-Jadida, No.59, March 1974. pp.182-190.

He later visited India, where he probably came into contact with Indian Communists[3]. He was a firm believer in Socialism, and was well versed in many foreign languages, which enabled him to translate articles on Marxism and Socialism for his friends and followers. Another outstanding figure in this group was Mahmud Ahmad, the cousin of 'Abd al-Fattah Ibrahim and 'Abd al-Qadir Isma'il, who had visited India in 1919, was influenced by the revolutionaries there and had absorbed some of the principles of scientific Socialism. He also had had contact with leaders of the labour movement and had experience of strikes and demonstrations[4]. Ahmad was one of the foremost orators of the Revolution of 1920 in Baghdad. Ahmad and al-Rahhal attracted politically conscious youngsters such as 'Abdullah Jadda', Mustafa 'Ali, Muhammed Salim Fattah, 'Auni Bakr Sidqi and 'Abd al-Hamid Rif'at[5], who were the nucleus of al-Ruwwad. They used to meet daily in an old café near Bab al-Sharqi which became a centre for young people, who came to listen to these grown-up discussions on political and social issues. Ibrahim and Jamil attended many of these sessions but Isma'il was a regular, especially in the later 1920s[6].

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3. Batatu, (1960), pp.60-62.

4. al-Rawi (1974), p.187. See also Batatu 1978, chapter 12. Batatu seems to concentrate his attention on Husain al-Rahhal, while Jama'at al-Ahali put him on par with Mahmud Ahmad.

5. Interview with Ibrahim and Isma'il; also al-Rawi (1974), p.187.

6. Interviews with Isma'il, Ibrahim and Jamil.

The group was interested in reading about the Bolshevik Revolution as well as in developments in other countries, but they looked to Egypt as the main source of information about socialism. The need for books and articles about socialism became pressing when al-Ruwwad published the country's first socialist newspaper, al-Sahifah (The Journal) in 1924, after which they were known as Jama'at al-Sahifah[7]. al-Ruwwad seems to have had contact with the leading socialists of the Arab world (especially in Egypt and Lebanon) and with the French Communist newspaper l'Humanité. In his article on the beginnings of socialism in Iraq, al-Rawi reproduces an interesting letter sent by Mahmud Ahmad to Comrade Niqula Haddad in Egypt dated 1923, in which the writer asked Haddad to supply them with socialist literature which they badly needed; "we want to be socialists, educated socialists ... and we cannot find books to satisfy our aspirations". The letter goes on to say that Ahmad and his friends had read Haddad's own book as well as Salama Musa's book on socialism, but they remained in need of more literature. This had prompted them to contact l'Humanité in France, who sent them some of their literature and catalogues, which were of course all in French. Ahmad urged Haddad to translate recent books on Marxism, which he called 'contemporary socialism', and asked to be sent back numbers of the Egyptian Socialist Party's newspaper al-Ishtiraki. Ahmad started his letter on a cynical note:

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7. al-Rawi (1974), p.187; see also Batatu (1978),Chapter 12.

"we, the people of Iraq, are isolated from the rest of the world, we have no contact with the advanced nations except through Reuter's telegrams, thank God!!!"[8]. Mahmud Ahmad also corresponded with Yusuf Yazbuk, one of the founders of the Syrian Communist party and the author of many novels dealing with socio-economic conditions and social injustices. In a letter to Yazbuk in April 1929, Ahmad implied that the group was then still active in spreading socialist ideas in Iraq[9].

al-Ruwwad subscribed to various progressive Egyptian magazines such as al-Muqtataf, al-Hilal, and al-Mustaqbal, and they also read the writings of Salama Musa, Shibli Shummayyil, Niqula Haddad, Taha Husain, 'Abd al-Qadar al-Mazini, and al-Aqqad's early writings on socialism. al-Muqtataf and the writings of Shummayyil and Haddad in particular made a significant contribution to the understanding and diffusion of socialist ideas in Iraq and in the Arab world[10]. al-Ruwwad influenced three of the four founders of Jama'at al-Ahali, namely, Ibrahim, Jamil and Isma'il, (Hadid lived in Mosul), in varying degrees. Ibrahim knew Mahmud Ahmad well, since he was his cousin and a frequent visitor to his house, and admired him a great deal[11]. It is most

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8. al-Rawi (1974), pp.187-8.

9. Khadduri, M. Political Trends in the Arab World; The Role of Ideas and Ideals in Politics (Baltimore 1972), pp.104-5. For Yazbuk's and Ahmad's style, see Ibid., p.103 and 105.

10. al-Rawi (1974), p.184. Also interviews with Isma'il and Jamil.

11. Interview with Ibrahim.

probable that al-Ruwwad implanted the seeds of socialism in Ibrahim's mind, made him aware of social injustice, deepened his resentment of British colonialism, and made him receptive to progressive ideas. However, he left Baghdad as soon as he finished secondary school at the end of 1923, and in fact himself discounts the influence of al-Ruwwad on his ideas. Nevertheless, he does not deny the impact of Ahmad's personality, and the fact that he was one of the most active Iraqi students from the moment of his arrival at the American University of Beirut, proves that he was well prepared politically. Jamil was probably the least influenced of the three as he used to attend al-Ruwwad meetings accompanied by his older brother and he only listened to the discussions. Jamil believes that these meetings made him aware of socialist ideas in general and of Marxism and the Bolshevik Revolution in particular. They also made him aware of social injustices in Iraq and elsewhere and deepened his concern for the plight of the poor and the deprived[12]. Of the four, Isma'il was certainly influenced the most by al-Ruwwad and he remained attached to them in one form or another until he left Iraq in the summer of 1937. Their discussions and dialogues interested and stimulated him, and the more he listened to their discussions on Socialism and Marxism, the more congenial he found their ideas. Mahmud Ahmad's and Yazbuk's literary style strongly influenced his own in his short stories and

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12. Interview with Jamil. See also, Jamil,H., "Bawakir al-Haraku al-Wataniya wa al-Taqadumiya fi al-'Iraq", al-Thaqafa al-Jadida, Vol.104, April 1978.

reports describing the economic difficulties facing the average Iraqi family, and the wretched life of the peasants in the Iraqi marshes[13]. Isma'il shared their concern for the plight of the poor and their exploitation by the rich and the British and expressed this in a simple and sensitive style[14].

Egyptian Influences

In the 1920s and 1930s, Egypt was the main source of literature on political ideas for the Arab reader, either written originally in Arabic or translated from European languages. It also provided the Arab world with a leading example of a national struggle for independence and democracy. During the early part of the 20th century, educated Iraqis considered Egypt to be a model for their own political aspirations and keenly watched developments there[15]. As has already been mentioned, Egyptian books, magazines and newspapers were regularly read and much sought after in Iraq. It is thus not surprising that educated Iraqis were well aware of the trends of thought and heated debates taking place among the relatively more numerous educated classes in Egypt. From Egypt came two main influences, the first that of ideology in general and the second that of the Wafd party as a mass independence movement. The British occupation of Iraq during the First World War, and the mandatory regime which followed had several parallels

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13. al-Shabab, vol.3,4, & 5, 1929; also al-Ahali,4.7.1934,-8.9.1934 describing 15 days in the marshes of Iraq.

14. Interview with Isma'il.

15. Interview with Jamil.

with the experience of contemporary Egypt, and the Iraqi Revolution of 1920 could be compared with the Egyptian revolt of 1919. However, the Egyptians had had a longer experience of colonial rule than the Iraqis, and had gained a certain amount of experience in organising themselves to gain independence. Hence Iraqi nationalists watched developments in Egypt to try to benefit from the lessons of the Egyptian example.

After 1918 the Egyptian nationalist movement developed into a mass or popular movement on a number of different levels. In the first place it attempted to rid Egypt of foreign domination and to achieve independence, and although it was led by educated middle-class lawyers, merchants and students, the Egyptian peasantry was present en masse and thus it was a truly popular independence movement. Secondly, it was a constitutional movement aimed at weakening the power of the King and the executive and at strengthening the legislative branch. The most powerful element in this period of Egyptian history was the Wafd party; indeed, the "history of the nationalist movement, at that period, is in fact, the history of the Wafd party"[16]. The figure of Sa'ad Zaghlul, leading the Egyptians in defiance of the British authorities and in search of Egyptian independence had a great impact on the imagination of young Iraqi nationalists, and the influence of the Wafd newspapers was also considerable outside Egypt. Again the influx of

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16. Ramadhan, A., Tatawwur al-Haraka al-Wataniya Fi Misr (The Development of the National movement in Egypt) (1918-1936), Cairo 1968, p.76.

Egyptian newspapers, magazines and books, transmitting the ideas of western and Arab (mainly Syrian), writers and thinkers, the latest in modern ideas, and the debates between progressive and conservative elements in Egypt, also had a great impact on educated Iraqis. As well as following these ideas and developments they also attempted to digest them for themselves and to create a similar political climate.

The two most important and influential Egyptian magazines were al-Muqtataf (first published in 1876) and al-Hilal (first published in 1892), which were devoted mainly to exploring different political concepts. At the turn of the century and afterwards they were engaged in heated debates over socialism and other modern doctrines[17] and were widely read by educated Iraqis, many of whom had regular subscriptions[18]. al-Muqtataf arrived in Baghdad as early as 1876[19]. The magazines fulfilled two major functions, the popularisation of the new ideas of socialism and the promotion of secularism. Although both al-Hilal and al-Muqtataf initially attempted to disparage socialism, the supporters of socialism had to explain its principles in the process and thus brought it to the attention of their readers. Furthermore,

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17. Abu Jaber, K. The Arab Ba'th Socialist party, History, Ideology and Organization, (Syracuse, N.Y. 1966), p.1; also Hourani, A., (1970) , pp.246-7, and Donald Reid, 'Early Christian Writers," IJMES, Vol.5, (1974), pp.179-190.

18. Interview with Jamil.

19. Hourani, (1970), p.247.

> From the discoveries of science, there could be inferred a system of social morality which was the secret of social strength; and that the basis of this moral system was public spirit or patriotism, the love of country and fellow countrymen which should transcend all other social ties, even those of religion: it was largely through the work of these periodicals that such ideas later became commonplace.[20]

Thus al-Muqtataf and al-Hilal brought the new ideology which had already influenced great numbers of educated people in the Arab world to Iraq. Here it is necessary to outline briefly the basic ideas of the Arab socialist thinkers, and to trace their impact and influence on at least some members of al-Ahali who admitted having been greatly influenced by them.

One of the first Arab socialists[21] was Shibli Shummayyil (1850-1917) a Syrian doctor of medicine, who had moved to Egypt. He had become interested in Darwin's theory of evolution while still a student at the American University of Beirut, and considered himself a social Darwinist. Later in life, he focused his attention on scientific socialism[22] and in 1908 drew up proposals for an Egyptian socialist party, with the notion of ppsitive government action for the public good rather than state ownership of the means of production as his central concern. His programme asserted that the government should control wages, improve public health, manage schools and provide employment[23]. Another important figure

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20. Ibid.

21. Maqsud, Clovis, Nahwa Ishtirakiya Arabiya (Towards Arab Socialism) 2nd edn., Beirut 1958, p.57, Quoted Abu Jaber (1966),p.2.

22. Reid,D.(1974),p.184.

23. Ibid., p.185.

of the socialist school was Niqula Haddad (1870-1954) who was more influential in his pursuit of socialism than Shummayyil. Yet he had a strikingly similar background. Haddad was a Syrian Christian who studied pharmacy at A.U.B. and moved to Egypt shortly after 1900[24]. Haddad published and edited various papers and magazines (including al-Muqtataf between 1948-1950), and wrote numerous articles and novels. Haddad's major contribution on the subject of socialism is his book al-Ishtirakiya (Socialism) (Cairo 1920), considered the first book in Arabic to appear on the subject (apart from a short pamphlet by Salama Musa in 1913)[25]. In his book, Haddad expressed his belief in democratic socialism and stated that political democracy was a prerequisite for economic democracy[26]. Thus democracy is necessary to achieve socialism; "once they have a democratic government, the socialists can launch a massive educational campaign to win over the voters and come to power legally". Haddad adopted Henry George's gradualist method as well as his 'single tax' on property as a means of equalising wealth and bringing in sufficient revenue to run the economy. He attacked free enterprise as inadequate and declared that it was capitalism rather than socialism which restricted individual freedom, led to

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24. Ibid., p.186; also Abu Jaber (1966), p.3.

25. Reid (1974), p.186.

26. Abu Jaber (1966),p.3.

laziness, and bordered on anarchy[27].

Both Shummayyil and Haddad were associates of Salama Musa, who was born into a distinguished Coptic family in 1817. He soon became involved with progressive writers and helped to edit many periodicals, notably al-Hilal and al-Mustaqbal. He also became involved with al-Muqtataf and became a friend and associate of progressive thinkers and was influenced by their ideas.In spite of changing direction at times, he remained fascinated by the scientific approach and loyal in principle to liberal ideas[28]. Musa travelled in Europe and meeting socialist groups there confirmed his belief in socialism. Between 1908 and 1911 he visited France and England and spent three years with the founders of l'Humanité and the Fabian Society. He was so impressed by the Fabians that he joined the Society himself[29]. In 1921 when the Egyptian Socialist Party was accused of being Communist, Musa wrote an article in al-Ahram (31.8.1921) denying that he was a Communist and asserting that he was a member of the Fabian Society, which he described as a moderate socialist society in London, saying that the Egyptian Socialist Party has exactly the same ideas[30].

In 1913, Musa published a pamphlet on socialism, al-Ishtirakiya (Cairo 1913, 1962) which Khadduri describes as a:

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27. Haddad, Niqula, al-Ishtirakiya,p.179-187, Quoted by Reid,p.187.

28. Reid (1974), p.188.

29. Ibid, p.189, also Abu Jaber, p.2.

30. Ramadhan (1968), p.520.

> Mixture of Utopian and Marxism socialism, since he combines the principles of the abolition of private property with that which recognises the variation of individual incomes. The brand of socialism[31] that Musa wanted for Egypt seemed to be a combination of parliamentary democracy and state socialism.[32]

He also published many articles in al-Hilal in 1920 describing and praising the Bolshevik revolution, and the ideology and system of the Soviet Union[33]. In 1921, he joined with other Egyptian intellectuals to form the Egyptian Socialist Party, but when the Party's executive committee decided to transform it into the Egyptian Communist Party[34] a year later, Musa resigned and wrote articles in al-Ahram attacking the move and declaring that he had severed all relations with the new party[35]. Musa's social and political ideology, his philosophy and his liberal approach, and his many books and articles made him one of the most influential and respected Arab thinkers of modern times, and the impact of his ideas were felt on generations of students in the Arab world. Khadduri believes:

> It is Musa who provides the most direct link between the Syrian Christian socialist pioneers of the early twentieth century and the Arab socialist of the 1960s.[36]

As well as the socialist pioneers, there were other writers and thinkers in Egypt who made a great impact on their own and succeeding generations in the Arab world,

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31. Musa favoured the use of Ijtima'iyah (Social) as a better rendition of 'Socialism', Reid (1974), p.190; quoting Musa, Tarbiyat (Education), Salama Musa, p.124.
32. Khadduri (1972), p.94.
33. Reid, (1974), p.189.
34. Ramadhan (1968), p.534.
35. Ibid., p.532; quoting al-Ahram, 4,9,19. 8.1922.
36. Khadduri (1972), p.228.

such as Taha Husain, 'Ali 'Abd al-Raziq, Mustafa Sadiq al-Rafi'i, and Isma'il Mazhar who contributed to the spread of free thought and a secular and scientific approach to life, society, religion, politics and culture. Once more, al-Muqtataf played a role in promoting these revolutionary ideas and sensitive issues by publishing articles by well-known people like Salama Musa and the Iraqi poet Jamil Sidqi al-Zahawi. But it was Isma'il Mazhar who devoted himself to the ideas of free thought, scientific approach and liberal or abstract ideas, and for that purpose he founded a periodical called al-'Usur (The Ages), which first appeared in 1927. al-'Usur found a receptive audience inside and outside Egypt, for it dealt with vital contemporary topics, and attracted contributions from liberal and progressive intellectuals. It won immediate success, and those who supported its principles became known as Jama'at al-'Usur. Although the periodical proved short-lived through lack of financial support and the strong criticism it attracted, it left a lasting influence on its readers. According to Khadduri "It taught a lesson to liberal thinkers to follow more subtle methods in spreading liberal ideas". Mazhar did not confine himself to preaching free thought; he advocated a "hybrid economic system which he called al-Takaful al-Ijtima'i or al-Ishtiraki (Social or Socialist Equilibrium), which was designed to replace free enterprise as well as socialism, since he considered that both had failed to build a stable society. Equilibrium meant providing

for moderation and individual security with equal opportunities to all under a system of guaranteed freedom, which would limit the individual's oppression of society as well as society's oppression of the individual. These views, according to Khadduri "are shared by many Arab thinkers who seem to be prepared to tolerate certain restrictions on individual liberty in order to achieve equitable distribution of wealth rather than tolerate disparity"[37].

It is thus possible to appreciate the enormous influence exerted on the founders of Jama'at al-Ahali by the influx of ideas, literature, or personalities coming from or through Egypt. Each of them had, at some time or other, regularly or occasionally, read al-Muqtataf and al-Hilal. Jamil was perhaps the most regular reader, while in Beirut Hadid also followed them with interest. On the other hand, Isma'il read them only occasionally and although Ibrahim affirms his interest in these and other Arabic periodicals, he denies that they had any permanent influence on his way of thinking. The founders of al-Ahali certainly acknowledged the stimulus of the early Arab socialists, like Shummayyil, Haddad, Musa and the others, who encouraged them to explore different ideologies further. Again Jamil admits to be the most influenced by them, particularly by Mazhar's theory of free thought and social equilibrium; Hadid acknowledges the strong influence of Salama Musa, and it is significant that Hadid became a member of the Fabian Society when he was a student at the London School of Economics.

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37. Khadduri (1972),p.238, p.259.

Thus individually or collectively, the influence of the Egyptian struggle for independence, together with Egyptian periodicals and books, left a great imprint on the al-Ahali movement as well as on their ideology, al-Sha'biya.

Influences from Outside the Arab World

Soon after the end of the First World War, political ideas and ideologies from other parts of the world began to filter through to Iraq, both from foreign literature and from Iraqis returning from outside the country. These ideas came from three main sources; Marxism from the Soviet Union; social democracy from Britain, France and Germany; and anti-colonialism from the example of the Indian independence movement. Jama'at al-Ahali and the left in general were particularly receptive to these various ideologies, and progressed from simple notions of independence and national self-determination to ideas of comprehensive social and economic reform. Since they both studied abroad, Hadid and Ibrahim were particularly instrumental in the transmission of these new ideas.

After graduating from A.U.B., Hadid went to London in 1928 to study Economics at L.S.E., while Ibrahim registered for an M.A. in Political Science at Columbia University in 1930. Although Hadid had been active in the student movement in Beirut, he was not committed to any particular political ideology before his arrival in London, apart from a general critical awareness of his country's backwardness and its

dependent semi-colonial status. However, within a few months of his arrival he had become deeply influenced by Harold Laski, who was his personal tutor as well as one of his main lecturers. Laski was a leading member of the Fabian Society, which had a strong ideological influence on the Labour Party in the late 1920s and early 1930s. In fact, at the general election of 1929, forty-seven out of ninety-nine Fabian candidates were elected, and eight Fabians had seats in the cabinet[38]. Hadid clearly found the atmosphere at L.S.E. highly congenial, and he was an enthusiastic and active member of the Fabian Society[39]. As will shortly be described, the influence of Fabianism on Jama'at al-Ahali was especially strong, in organisational and strategic as well as ideological terms.

Ibrahim was particularly interested in modern European history, and had written a B.A. dissertation on the Bolshevik revolution during his final year at A.U.B. in 1928. At Columbia University he studied with Parker Thomas Moon, the author of Imperialism and World Politics[40], and began an M.A. on Anglo-Iraqi relations. Although he did not complete the thesis, the material he collected formed the basis of his 'Ala Tariq al-Hind, published as an al-Ahali tract. His reading at Columbia gave him deeper

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38. Cole, Margaret, The Story of Fabian Socialism (London 1961), p.218. For the Fabians' views on anti-colonialism, see Martin, Kingsley, Harold Laski (1893-1950) A Biographical Memoir (London, 1953), pp.64-68, 90-91.

39. Interview with Hadid.

40. Moon, P.T., Imperialism and World Politics, (New York 1922).

insight into the workings of imperialism, and in general he was also profoundly influenced by Marxist thought. Although at heart a social democrat, he has always maintained an admiration for Marxist analysis and the achievements of the Soviet Union. His view of nationalism reveals an obvious debt to Stalin's writings on the national question[41].

However, the most decisive foreign influence on al-Ahali was undoubtedly the Fabian Society. This is clear from an examination of various aspects of the Society's activities, principles, and organisation, and from a comparison of the two groups' publications and general theoretical interests. A study of the Fabian Society describes it as follows:

> The Fabian Society is neither a socialist party nor pre-eminently a school of socialist doctrines, but a group of men and women who are endeavouring to spread practical views on immediate and pressing social problems, and to indicate the way for their embodiment in legislative and administrative measures. According to these views socialism is not a revolutionary movement of the working classes for the purpose of establishing some new form of society, nor is it an anti-parliamentary and an extra-national system of co-operation. It is the result of a long series of national problems, which have arisen out of the manifold economic, social, and spiritual changes that were taking place in the last century, and which must be dealt with by the nation if it desires to raise its efficiency and to continue its upward progress.[42]

Shaw, who later became a member of the Society, described the founding members of the Fabian Society somewhat

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41. Interview with Ibrahim.

42. Beer, M.A., History of British Socialism, Vol.II, (London 1953), pp.276-277.

disparagingly in 1884 as "middle-class philanthropists who believe themselves to be socialists"[43], while a modern author gives a more favourable verdict; they were:

> ... scholarly young idealists, who were radicals of a ... different sort. The founding Fabians were convinced free thinkers, alienated from convention ...[44]

The early Fabians were more concerned with positive action as a means of regenerating society than with precise theoretical formulations and had a spirit of optimism and faith in humanist values like the young founders of al-Ahali. The basic principles of the Society centred on the achievement of a form of democratic socialism in which the state would control the economy and be generally responsible for the health and social welfare of the population. Such aims were to be realised by strictly gradualist and constitutional means. Hence 'democracy would be the political agent of socialism'[45].

There are other similarities between this ideology and that of al-Sha'biya. Both the Fabians and al-Ahali rejected the notion of class struggle or violent revolution, believing that social change could be achieved by raising consciousness through programmes of mass education[46]. Hence

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43. Wolfe, W., From Radicalism to Socialism (New Haven, 1975), p.164.

44. Ibid., p.151.

45. Cole, 1961, pp.27-30.

46. Ibid., pp.7-9. See also below, Part III.

both groups produced a series of publications in the form of essays, tracts, and a magazine, the Fabian New Statesman with its special supplements, and al-Ahali newspaper with its supplements, and the essays collected in Rasa'il al-Ahali ila al-Shabab. Both groups restricted membership to selected individuals[47], and al-Ahali adopted the Fabian pledge, which was an oath or undertaking to serve the Society to the member's best ability,to contribute monthly dues, and to attend the Society's meetings[48].

India

Finally, the founders of al-Ahali, Jamil and Isma'il in particular, were keenly interested in the progress of the Indian independence struggle.They admired Gandhi's policy of non-violent resistance, but also applauded Nehru's more practical vision and aggressive style. The first two photos published on the front page of al-Ahali were of the two Indian leaders leading their people in defiance of British rule. The first issue of al-Ahali began a serialisation of Gandhi's life which ran for several weeks. al-Ahali also used the technique of boycotting foreign goods and companies, both in appeals through the newspaper and in the action against the Electric Light Company in 1934. The following comment on Nehru could equally well apply to Ibrahim, Hadid or Jamil from the point of view of family background and attitudes as well as of ideology:

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47. Ibid., p. 8.

48. Ibid., pp.57-8.

> Nehru, for all his attachment to Western manners and ideas, was an epitome of Indian, indeed Asian, nationalism. There was no contradiction in his attempt to imbibe all that was good in Western thought while fighting British Imperialism nor in his parallel efforts to combine in himself the best values of both Western liberalism and Marxist ideology.[49]

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49. Malhotra, I., "Nehru", The Guardian, 28.5.1979.

4. The Ideology of Jama'at al-Ahali

This section will discuss the ideas and principles developed by the founders of Jama'at al-Ahali in the early 1930s known collectively as Mabda' al-Sha'biya[1] (The principles or ideology of Popularism[2]). al-Sha'biya was not based on a comprehensive or coherent theory, but was rather a selection of ideas which formed the basis of a set

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1. The sources which have been used to define the group's ideology are:
   i) al-Ahali newspapers (al-Ahali and Sawt al-Ahali 1932-1946).
   ii) al-Ahali tracts (Essays), entitled Rasa'il al-Ahali ila al-Shabab (al-Ahali Tracts for Youth) in 3 volumes.
      a) 'Ala Tariq al-Hind (On the Way to India), al-Ahali Press, Baghdad, 1932.
      b) al-Sha'biya fi al-Mabadi' al-Siyasiya al-Haditha (Popularism in Modern Political Ideologies), Vol.1, al-Ahali Press, Baghdad, 1933.
      c) Mutala'at fi al-Sha'biya (Reflections on Popularism), Baghdad, 1933.
   iii) Minhaj al-Sha'biya (The Programme or summary of Popularism) which was a summary of the ideology. Appendix C.
   iv) The recollections of the founders.

2. See page 1 above.

of common principles. The literature published by Jama'at al-Ahali on al-Sha'biya tended to describe its views towards other ideologies rather than what it was and how it was supposed to function. This point also emerged in conversation with the founders, since each individual tended to define al-Sha'biya in the way most congenial to his political convictions and personal point of view both then and at the present time.

al-Sha'biya was defined as a 'view of social reform aimed at ensuring security, prosperity and progress for all the people on the basis of equal opportunity for every citizen'[3]. A similar definition appeared in the 'Manifesto' pamphlet which stated:

> There is no comprehensive definition of al-Sha'biya. It is a view of the problems which members of society face in their different walks of life. These problems are divided, according to their nature, into political, economic and social. al-Sha'biya attempts to ensure security, prosperity and progress for society.[4]

This definition is vague and does not easily distinguish al-Sha'biya from other ideologies. Ibrahim's definition in 1977 was slightly more specific:

> A political and social movement which believed in the ability of democracy to improve the general conditions of the population, seeking to achieve a form of national sovereignty which would bring about the political and economic independence of Iraq.[5]

Although al-Ahali was a genuinely Iraqi movement, its

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3. Mutala'at Fi al-Sha'biya (Reflections) (1935),p.1.

4. Minhaj al-Sha'biya (Summary of Popularism),(1932),p.1., and pp. 393-395 below.

5. Interview with Ibrahim.

ideology was self-confessedly put together from other, mostly Western, sources[6]. The name al-Sha'biya was adopted to avoid the label of socialism, al-Ishtirakiyya, which would have carried a certain stigma in Iraq and the Arab world at the time[7]. Furthermore, the group, and 'Abd al-Fattah Ibrahim in particular, were eager to come up with a new ideology which they could claim as their own. They probably thought that the name al-Sha'biya would be more acceptable to Iraqis, and the word was also identical in meaning to the name of their newspaper, al-Ahali.

One of 'Abd al-Fattah Ibrahim's articles stated:

> We have written about our ideology, and rumours and myths have surrounded us. They attached various political names and labels to us; some tried to use this to impede our holy struggle... We are popularists and what we mean by popularism is a common concern for the interests of the majority of the people, who are the pillar of the structure of the State. We are popularists, and the standard by which we judge everything is the interests of the people. Whoever sides with the people, we will support, and whoever opposes the people's interests we will fight.[8]

The principles of al-Sha'biya were geared toward regenerating Iraq and transforming it into an independent and democratic state by changing the pattern of its political, social and economic life. The following general principles and objectives were agreed on by the founders of al-Ahali after a series of meetings and discussions in 1931:

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6. al-Ahali, 8.10.1932, and al-Sha'biya, vol.I,1933,p.2.

7. Abu Jaber (1966), p.5.

8. Nahnu Sha'biyyun (We are Popularists), al-Ahali, 8.10.1932.

1. The achievement of complete independence for Iraq.
2. The achievement of popular sovereignty through a democratic and constitutional form of government.
3. The rejection of the capitalist system of free enterprise and the adoption of a system in which the economy would be guided and controlled by the State.
4. The reduction of economic disparities between social classes.
5. The establishment of a modern State to achieve the above goals.[9]

Patriotism (al-Wataniya) is the underlying theme of the whole ideology. al-Ahali's manifesto stated the movement's three basic principles (al-mabadi' al-asasiya), which also form the basis of al-Sha'biya. These are: security (al-itmi'nan), prosperity (al-rafah) and progress (al-taqaddum). Security was understood in a formal political sense. al-Ahali postulated the need for a sovereign democratic constitutional state in which the people were to be supreme. Prosperity was to be achieved by the state taking over the direction and planning of the economy, as well as control over major industries, agriculture, financial institutions and public utilities. Economic disparities were to be narrowed by progressive income and inheritance taxes. Progress would be achieved by the provision of free universal

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9. Interview with Jamil.

education for children, an anti-illiteracy campaign for adults, free health care, and a comprehensive social insurance programme. Particular attention would be paid to measures which would achieve the emancipation of women in the context of a modern society[10].

In addition, a further set of less explicit but fairly consistent tenets emerges from a study of al-Ahali literature. Democracy and socialism are particularly important: the state must control the economy and the organisation of society, while the state in its turn must be controlled by democratic forces. However, this is to be achieved by essentially gradualist methods, through reform, not revolution, and the ideology is eclectic rather than doctrinaire. Patriotism is another important element, though unlike the Pan-Arabists, al-Ahali did not take up any strong ideological position on Arab nationalism. It was essentially secular and non-sectarian without being anti-religious, and was particularly directed towards and attractive to educated young people.

A further indication of the essentially moderate nature of al-Sha'biya was the notion of an ideally harmonious equilibrium between the individual's rights and duties and the state's authority and functions. Thus the state should only interfere in society when such intervention was necessary in the public interest. The third al-Ahali

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10. Minhaj al-Sha'biya.

essay stated:

> The duty of the individual citizen is to work as hard as he can and to obey the law in order to safeguard and maintain the democratic process. The rights and duties of the citizen make his relationship with the government the basis on which his rights and duties are balanced to achieve the supremacy of the people, which is the essence of al-Shab'iya.[11]

al-Sha'biya affirmed its belief in democracy, and the achievement of a genuinely representative parliamentary form of government:

> The people elect their representatives from their own ranks; each sector of society elects its own representatives. The peasants elect peasants to represent them, and the workers elect workers. This method al-Sha'biya considers to be real (hagiqi) representation and genuine people's democracy.[12]

As for who should lead the democratic system and rule the state, al-Sha'biya states optimistically that "In order to have a truly democratic system, intelligent and honest men should lead the government, not professional politicians"[13].

al-Sha'biya emphasis on social democracy was the core of its principles and objectives. Hadid says: "We concentrated on the idea of democracy and the establishment of a social democratic system in Iraq; we were not concerned with the details of socialism"[14]. The founders of Jama'at al-Ahali, especially Ibrahim and Hadid, thought that

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11. Mutala'at fi al-Sha'biya Vol.11 (1935),pp.1-8.
12. Ibid., p.14.
13. al-Sha'biya, Vol.1 (1933), pp.29-30.
14. Interview with Hadid.

democracy was the solution as well as the cure for all the problems in Iraq. Some of them had seen democracy in operation in the West, especially in Britain, and were struck by the West's progress and prosperity compared to their own country's backwardness. They realised that there was no lack of ability or intelligence on the part of their own people, since many of them had proved their worth in some of the best Western academic institutions. Hence they came to believe that the country's backwardness resulted from its corrupt and stagnant political system, and the subordination of national interests to those of a foreign power. Hence if 'true' democracy were to be achieved in Iraq, the country would be set on the road to progress and prosperity. According to Ibrahim:

> Democracy was to achieve independence as well as socialism. It would give the opportunity to every Iraqi to improve the quality of his life and his material standard of living. Peasants and workers would seek to improve their conditions, educate their children, organize themselves in trade unions, and demand higher wages and better working conditions. The Iraqi people wanted a sovereign state, free from foreign influence and interference.[15]

However, these beliefs begged two important questions as far as political action was concerned. In the first place, how could a movement which believed in democracy and gradual social change implement its ideology in a society with a corrupt autocratic system of government, where vested

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15. Interview with Ibrahim.

interests were backed by the military might of a foreign power? And secondly, how was this relatively advanced ideology to be understood by a backward and illiterate society? Jama'at al-Ahali certainly recognised these problems although its solutions were probably rather simplistic. Broadly speaking, the group felt that education in general and political education in particular would make people aware of their rights and the social injustices which they suffered. It also drew comparisons between life in more advanced societies and life in Iraq, to show how exploitation and monopoly control ran counter to the national interest, which would only be served by genuine democracy. In its various publications it also attempted to explain other political ideologies and systems, and was generally concerned in the process of politicising all sections of Iraqi society.

To this end, a number of different initiatives were taken. In January 1932, al-Ahali newspaper commenced publication, and continued to function through much of the period until 1946, and in fact was only finally suppressed as late as 1962[16]. It contained weekly supplements which fulfilled a similar political and educational role to that of the Egyptian reviews al-Muqtataf and al-Hilal which

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16. Sawt al-Ahali appeared on 14 March 1934. After 75 issues it was suppressed, to reappear on 23 September 1942.

have been mentioned earlier, and, to a certain extent, of the Fabian New Statesman. Members of the group, particularly Ibrahim, also wrote essays and pamphlets explaining and promoting the principles of al-Sha'biya and other political ideologies. The first essay, 'Ala Tariq al-Hind dealt with Western imperialism and the historical background to Britain's interests in Iraq[17]. The essays were collected in a three-volume series called Rasa'il al-Ahali ila al-Shabab, al-Ahali tracts for youth, whose title was a clear echo of the Fabian tracts.

Three further developments took place on a more practical level. The Society for Eradicating Illiteracy, founded in 1933, called on educated Iraqis to support and assist in the foundation of adult literacy centres throughout the country. In the same year Nadi Baghdad, the Baghdad Club, was opened as a cultural centre for meetings, debates, and general educational purposes, but was also used, though not overtly, to promote the principles of al-Sha'biya. Finally, in late 1933 and 1934, the group began to organise a secret society which came to be composed of some fifty full members who had all taken a pledge to support the principles of al-Sha'biya. The society, which included Ja'far Abu al-Timman, Kamil al-Chadirchi and Hikmat Sulaiman as well as the founders of al-Ahali, co-operated with Bakr Sidqi, who was also a member, in the coup d'état of 1936. After the coup, the

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17. Published first in 1932 and again in 1935.

society was made legal, and called itself Jam'iyyat al-Islah al-Sha'bi, The Popular Reform League. Attempts to turn the League into a well organised political party capable of taking part in elections were foiled, mainly by Bakr Sidqi himself, and it was suppressed in the summer of 1937. It was not until 1946 that Jama'at al-Ahali succeeded in forming three legal but separate political parties.

The Attitudes of al-Sha'biya towards Other Ideologies[18]

Although Jama'at al-Ahali published two volumes on al-Sha'biya, written mainly by 'Abd al-Fattah Ibrahim, there was more emphasis on its attitude towards other ideologies than on al-Sha'biya itself. In spite of this vagueness, it was generally based on the principles of social democracy, and largely influenced by the principles of the Fabian Society. However, al-Sha'biya attempts to distinguish between 'people's democracy' and 'capitalist democracy', the latter term being applied to describe the political systems of Britain or the United States. Jama'at al-Ahali believed that capitalist democracy largely benefitted the rich ruling class at the expense of the mass of the population. Equally, al-Sha'biya strongly condemned both capitalist and fascist exploitation of patriotism (al-wataniya), which it considered should be directed towards service to one's country and social reform in general. Nationalism (qawmiya), it claimed, had been

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18. This section is based on the two volumes of al-Sha'biya (1933 and 1935).

used throughout history by the capitalist ruling class as a device to spread hatred and division between nations, causing the spilling of innocent blood. Thus:

> al-Sha'biya sees the history of nationalism as stained with blood and filled with atrocities. It is one of the methods used by the governing elite to exploit the people.

As far as the Arab world was concerned, the emphasis was on co-operation against imperialism rather than any call for unity.

al-Sha'biya distinguished between what it saw as two kinds of dictatorship, the first was collective dictatorship (al-diktatoriya al-haqiqiya), backed by a mass political party with an ideology, as in the Soviet Union or Fascist Italy. The second, individual or superficial dictatorship (al-diktatoriya al-fardiya or al-suwariya) was typified by Turkey, Iran and South American dictatorships which depended on the military for their survival. al-Sha'biya supported the class dictatorship of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, but turned from a short-lived initial approval of Mussolini to criticism and rejection by March 1932[19]. al-Sha'biya approved of most of the ideology of Communism, particularly the notion of state regulation of the economy and the abolition of exploitation and monopoly, but rejected the principle of class struggle and the dictatorship of the proletariat. It also rejected any

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19. al-Ahali, 29.3.1932.

revolutionary means of changing the social order, and what was seen as the sacrifice of individual liberties[20]. Again, it considered that Communism did not give sufficient emphasis to religion or family structure[21].

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20. Ibrahim's criticism of Communism and nationalism occasioned strong reactions from the supporters of these ideologies, and created a deep and long-lasting rift between them and Jama'at al-Ahali. This was also one of the principal reasons for the conflict between Ibrahim and Kamil al-Chadirchi. See below, Chapter X.

21. Thus al-Sha'biya allows religion to exist "to the extent to which it is required by the people's interests" and guards the family unit and structure "in such a way as to secure the happiness of the individual and the safety of the public."

P A R T II

PART II
(Chapters V, VI, VII)

Introduction

During the period between 1932 and 1946, in which Jama'at al-Ahali was a major force in Iraqi opposition politics, a number of key events helped to shape the political system as a whole, and generally to determine its direction. Some of these have been mentioned briefly above, but since their influence was so crucial and Jama'at al-Ahali was so profoundly affected by them and had an equally profound effect upon them, it is important to discuss them in some detail. In chronological order, these events were the Assyrian incident of May-August 1933, King Faisal's death in September of the same year, the tribal uprisings of 1934 to 1937, the Bakr Sidqi coup d'état of October 1936, and the political and economic developments during World War II which led to the legalisation of political parties in 1946.

Chapter V

Significant Events 1932-1936

1. The Assyrian Incident

The Assyrians were the descendants of a Christian community living mainly in the Hakkiari mountains in Eastern Turkey, which had been recognised as a millet within the Ottoman Empire in 1845. In 1915 they were persuaded by Czarist Russia to rise against the Turks; the revolt failed, and as a result they were driven from their homes and made their way to Iraq via Persia. The Assyrians joined the British forces in Mesopotamia just before the signing of the armistice, and were settled in a temporary camp at Ba'quba, some thirty miles east of Baghdad, under the hope that they would one day be able to return to their homeland. In 1920 the Ba'quba camp was closed and the Assyrians were moved north to the Mosul liwa[1]. Many of them took up employment in the Levies, a body of about 4,500 Imperial troops who served with the R.A.F., both as aerodrome guards and as ground support troops, particularly in the various operations in Kurdistan in the 1920s[2]. In spite of attempts by Britain to press Turkey to cede the Hakkiari mountains to Iraq

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1. For a detailed study of the Assyrian incident, see Stafford,R.S., The Tragedy of the Assyrians (London 1935); also Husry, Khaldun S., "The Assyrian Affair", IJMES 1974, No.2 (April, pp.161-176) and No.3, (June, pp.344-360).

2. Sluglett (1976), p.214; also Batatu (1978), p. 90.

in 1926, the territory remained in Turkey and the Assyrians were thus unable to return to their homes.

Throughout the mandate years, the Assyrians, especially the Levies, had generally shown little respect for the Iraq government, and more particularly, the Iraq Army. The British officers of the Levies constantly assured them that they were first-class troops and this encouragement served to exacerbate tensions. To make matters worse, the Assyrians refused to accept Iraqi citizenship or to deal directly with the Iraqi authorities, preferring to go through the British High Commissioner. On two occasions, in Kirkuk in 1924 and Mosul in 1926, the Assyrian Levies had been responsible for outbreaks of violence which resulted in a large number of deaths and injuries[3].

The prospect of Britain's departure from Iraq in 1932 gave the minorities cause for concern, and in 1931 the Assyrians had expressed their desire to leave the country[4]. Britain was naturally keenly interested in the affairs of the minorities and the Assyrians in particular, for obvious political reasons, which made the Iraqis highly suspicious of their motives, since the Levies had clearly been used during the mandate as a kind of counterpoise to

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3. Husry, K., (1974), p.166.

4. Desire of the Assyrians to leave Iraq - letter from the Mar Shim'un to the Permanent Mandate Commission. Reported in 15.8.1931, FO 371/15321/E 5871 and in 4.7.1931, FO 371/15321/ E 5658.

the infant Iraq Army[5].

In 1932 the government submitted guarantees for the protection of the minorities to the League of Nations, pledging to treat them justly as a condition for its admission[6]. At the same time, the Assyrians under their young leader the Mar Shim'un, also submitted petitions to the League, demanding the establishment of an autonomous enclave in Iraq, and claiming that Britain was failing to provide adequately for their future after the termination of the mandate.

In April 1932, a secret pact was concluded between the Mar Shim'un and some Assyrian Levy officers, which confirmed him as their leader, thus assuring him of their support in his attempt to gain autonomy from Iraq by means of a 'coup de main' if necessary. This was followed on 16 June by a meeting of the Assyrian leaders, who afterwards submitted a petition to the High Commissioner for transmission to the League. It demanded that the Assyrian community should be recognised as a millet, and that a national home should be established for them in the north of Iraq, which was to include the Hakkiari mountains. It also demanded the recognition of the Mar Shim'un as the spiritual and temporal leader of the community, with an annual subsidy from the government. The League rejected the

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5. Batatu (1978), p.90.

6. Air 23/5980 , Ref. CICI/BD/13 "Brief History of Iraq")1914-1941)" of 10 July 1941, p.4.

petition and the Iraq government's efforts to establish a working relationship with the Mar Shim'un and secure his co-operation in maintaining peace in the northern region ultimately failed.

Growing tension in the north prompted the local British Administrative Inspector to urge the government to recall the Mar Shim'un to Baghdad and to send a military force to the area[7]. In May 1933, the Minister of the Interior, Hikmat Sulaiman, invited the Mar Shim'un to Baghdad[8] and on 24 June an army unit under the command of Brigadier Bakr Sidqi was dispatched to the Dohuk-'Amadiya area, where some 200 armed Assyrian bands were massed in defiance of government authority[9].

In Baghdad, the government tried to come to terms with the Mar Shim'un; it would not grant him any temporal authority, but was ready to recognise him officially as spiritual head of his church, which was not sufficient for the Mar Shim'un[10]. With the approval of his advisor, C.J. Edmonds, the Minister of Interior, Hikmat Sulaiman, decided to detain him in Baghdad. Meanwhile King Faisal

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7. Husry, R.(1974), pp.166-171.

8. For details of the negotiations between the government and the Mar Shim'un, see INA File D/11 documents Nos. 99-108.

9. Husry, K. (1974), p.170.

10. Ibid., p.173.

who was in Europe, counselled patience in dealing with the Assyrians[11]. He returned to Baghdad at the end of July "acting on strong British advice"[12] to find that the situation had become completely out of hand; on the 23rd July, some 1200 armed Assyrians had crossed the Iraqi frontier into French-mandated Syria apparently under the impression that the French authorities would welcome them. However, they did not meet a particularly enthusiastic reception, and began to attempt to filter back to Iraq. The Iraq Army under Bakr Sidqi moved to the frontier area with orders not to allow the Assyrians to recross unless they had surrendered their arms[13]. Either by accident or by design:

> The Syrian (French) authorities, after disarming the Assyrians, returned their arms and permitted their return to Iraq without notifying Iraq government, contrary to frontier agreement. A party of Assyrians pretending submission attacked Iraqi military post inflicting casualties

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11. In 1936 Nuri al-Sa'id revealed to the British Ambassador that King Faisal was the chief culprit behind the killing of the Assyrians and what had been done had been the result of his directions. This statement seems to have been accepted by the British Embassy and the Foreign Office, Minutes by J.G.Ward dated 30.12.1936, and letter from C.J.Edmonds to Ogilvie-Forbes dated 24.8.1933; See Ambassador to S/S Foreign Affairs, FO371/20015/E8113 of 15.12.1936.

12. Minutes by G.W.Rendel, dated 25.7.1933, see FO371/16916/E4082 of 20.7.1933.

13. Air 23/5980, p.5.
The Assyrians were given rifles upon being discharged from the Levies under their condition of service with the R.A.F., ostensibly to defend themselves against armed Kurdish tribesmen.

> the distraction permitting re-entry of the remainder. Armed men of Assyrian villages rushed to aid their returning brethren, leaving villages open to plunder by Kurds, who had begun to act. The situation is critical and probably will bring about a three-cornered conflict between Assyrians, Kurds and Iraq Army.[14]

The outcome of the attack on the Iraqi post was 30 soldiers killed and 40 wounded. The Assyrians in turn suffered a number of casualties; some 500 were driven back to Syria, and the remainder took to the hills with the army in pursuit, assisted by Kurdish and Arab tribesmen. The bloodiest incident took place on the 11th August at the village of Summaiyl where about 315 unarmed Assyrian women and children were machine-gunned by a company of the army under the command of Isma'il 'Abbawi Tuhalla, the murderer of Ja'far al-'Askari in 1936. Although Bakr Sidqi was in Mosul at the time of the incident, he was almost certainly its instigator[15]. Hikmat Sulaiman admitted that he had approved the general line of policy which Bakr Sidqi adopted[16], but subsequently managed to convince the British of his essentially moderating role[17].

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14. Knabenshue to State Department, 8.8.1933, USNA 890 G.00/257.

15. Longrigg (1953), p.235.

16. Khadduri (1960), p.44.

17. Ambassador to S/S Foreign Affairs, 15.12.1936, FO 371/20015/E8133 (enclosing letter of C.J.Edmonds which contains his evaluation of Hikmat Sulaiman).

The timing and a number of other elements involved in the incident add to its significance. It created an opportunity for the Rashid 'Ali's al-Ikha government to regain the favour of the opposition and the confidence of the public, since they had damaged their credentials by abandoning the Ta'akhi charter[18] under which they had agreed not to form a government without demanding substantial alterations to the 1930 Treaty. The Prime Minister Rashid 'Ali al-Gailani and his Minister of Interior Hikmat Sulaiman, capitalising on popular sentiment, worked in defiance of the King and apparently against British advice. They attempted to show that they were safeguarding the national interest and that they had in no sense sold out to the British. At the same time they were not being sufficiently belligerent towards Britain to risk dismissal. Rashid 'Ali's government had allegedly followed a reasonable attitude toward the Assyrians and it claimed that it was the Assyrian leaders who were "hot-headed"[19]. Besides, it was the Army, not the Police, who had taken the harsh measures.

The reception and celebrations organised by the residents of Mosul and Baghdad to welcome the returning army units demonstrated the extent of public support for the operation against the Assyrians. The incident was

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18. See above, p.55.

19. Air 23/5980, p.5.

recalled by those who witnessed or experienced it as one of the few triumphant events of the period[20].

The two main sources of anti-Assyrian sentiment were first, the newspaper campaign against the Mar Shim'un and the Levies, spearheaded by al-Ahali newspaper, and second, local resentment in northern Iraq on the part of both the Army and the local civilian population. al-Ahali portrayed the Mar Shim'un's intransigence and the defiant behaviour of the Assyrians as a challenge to Iraq's newly acquired independence, and an insult to the national honour[21]. Furthermore, it alleged that the incident provided yet more proof of Britain's continuing interference in Iraq's internal affairs. Local residents had long resented the high-handed behaviour of the Levy troops, particularly in Mosul and Kirkuk. In general the incident was seen both as an act of revenge for past insults and as proof that the government was master in its own house and was prepared to defy Britain. al-Ahali further accused Britain of actively assisting the

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20. Husry's account includes his own childhood memory of the incident.

21. al-Ahali, 30.7.1933, and 1,3,4,6,7 August 1933. See also al-Istiqlal and al-Ikha' al-Watani for the same dates.

Assyrians[22] and attempted to dissuade such interference. Prince Ghazi, acting as Regent during his father's absence from the country, publicly supported the Army's action, to such an extent that 'the nationalists are threatening to force (the) abdication of King Faisal in favour of (the) Crown Prince'[23].

Thus the Army under Bakr Sidqi not only settled old scores and put an end to the superiority of the Levies, but it was also now hailed as the saviour of the 'nation' and the 'protector of the homeland'[24]. Bakr Sidqi was acclaimed as a 'hero'[25]. Even Brigadier-General Headlam,

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22. As a result the British government instructed the Acting Ambassador Mr. Ogilvie Forbes to address a formal note of protest to the Iraqi government. See Foreign Office to Mr. Ogilvie Forbes telegram of 28.7.1933. FO371/16916/E4082.
On the King's return Mr. Ogilvie-Forbes protested again against the offensive article in al-Ahali of July 30th, and presented the paper to the King. "King Faisal with a gesture of shame seized the offending paper from my hand and threw it under his chair. He asked me to convey his sincere apologies to His Majesty's government. I said I hoped that something would be done to the editor and His Majesty promised to take up matter personally with the Prime Minister". Acting Ambassador to S/S Foreign Affairs 3.8.1933. FO371/16916/E4358.

23. Knabenshue to State Department, 4.9.1933, USNA 890 G.00/265.

24. Husry, K. (1974), p.352.

25. Air 23/5980, p.6.
Also Longrigg (1953), p.236.

the British Acting Inspector-General of the Army, commended Bakr Sidqi's role in dealing with the Assyrians; "The government and people of Iraq have good reasons to be thankful to Colonel(sic) Bakr Sidqi and his forces for the success on 4-5 August"[26]. Besides gaining popularity and notoriety as an able and ruthless officer, Sidqi now developed strong ties with Hikmat Sulaiman [27] and a working relationship with King Ghazi, which was to become particularly important in 1936. However, the most significant outcome of the Assyrian conflict was the new role the Army subsequently assumed in the political system. As it grew in popularity and influence to become the real power in the country, the politicians began to compete for its favour and to align themselves with its leaders.

As a further result of the incident, al-Ahali newspaper, which had led the campaign against the Assyrians and the British intervention was suppressed for ten days in August, probably as a result of direct pressure on the Iraq government on the part of the British Foreign Office[28].

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26. Husry, (1974), p.175.

27. Interview with Husain Jamil.

28. On 8th August Mr. Ogilvie Forbes telegrammed his Government "Newspaper in question (al-Ahali) has been suspended for ten days."
Ogilvie Forbes to S/S Foreign Affairs 9.8.1933, FO 371/16916/E4433.

This undoubtedly gave the paper great popular prestige, but perhaps even more important was the relationships which were established between members of the group and Hikmat Sulaiman and Bakr Sidqi. Hence, well before the coup of 1936, Jama'at al-Ahali had begun to draw closer to the political and civilian opposition forces, and this association was to be of major significance for the future of the group and the country.

2. The Effect of King Faisal's Death on the Position of the Monarchy and the Political System

When Faisal became King of Iraq he had to cope with numerous difficulties which arose partly because he was a foreigner and partly because of his anomalous position under the mandate. However, after several years he emerged as an experienced and prestigious politician and diplomat, with a strong instinct for political survival. However, his reign was not without difficulties, since he had to try and meet the demands of the nationalists while attempting to maintain a good relationship with his British masters. Batatu describes his dilemma and tactics as follows:

> Suffering the buffets of the English on the one side and the national opposition on the other, Faisal could now enlarge the sphere of his authority only subtly and gradually. Inasmuch as the appearance of power is not completely separable from its substance, by clinging to the one, he acquired more and more of the other, edging the English, whenever opportunity offered, out of a degree after degree of their influence. Simultaneously, he kept his hands on the political pulse of the country and, while leaning on the ex-Sherifian officers - now the backbone of Iraq's new army - he maintained contact with all the existing forces and shades of opinion, and placed himself publicly above rivalries between parties, sects, or tribal combinations. [1]

Although Faisal clearly wanted to transform Iraq into a modern country, he was well aware of the immense problems which this involved. In 1930 the U.S. Legation reported that the King was taking a particularly active part in

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1. Batatu (1978), p.362.

directing the policies of the kingdom[2], probably as a consequence of Sir Henry Dobbs' departure and the death of 'Abd al-Muhsin al-Sa'dun. In the same report, the U.S. Minister cited the King's active influence on the selection of the members of Nuri al-Said's cabinet:

> One thing seems very evident, and that is that the members of the new Cabinet, with the possible exception of Abdul Hussain al-Chalabi, owe their appointment mainly to the fact that they have long been very loyal followers of King Faisal. It will be noted from a study of their biographies that they were all soldiers, with the exception of Abdul Hussain al-Chalabi, and that they all served under King Faisal in the Arab revolt.[3]

Even the British officials who occasionally disagreed with his policies, were forced to recognise Faisal's capabilities and his grasp of politics. The acting High Commissioner, Hubert Young, reported in 1931 that:

> It cannot be denied that he (Faysal) has been remarkably successful during the past ten years in maintaining connection with all shades of political opinion, and while the methods adopted have been open to criticism, the results obtained have certainly justified them.[4]

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2. Sloan to State Department, 1.4.1930. USNA 890G.00/128.

3. Ibid., for further details of Faisal's skill at political manipulation see Batatu (1978) and Pool (1972), passim.

4. Young papers, St Antony's College Oxford, quoted in Pool (1972),p.188. There have been various recent attempts by Iraqi historians to re-evaluate King Faisal and his policies through the mandate and the Independence years. In general they seem to exonerate him of earlier harsh judgements, of being a British 'agent' or 'tool' and to show some aspects of his nationalist aspirations and his clever dealings with British High Commissioners as well as with the Iraqi Nationalists: See al-Adhami,M, Afaq 'Arabiya, IV, No.1, Jan.1979, Baghdad, pp.86-95, and earlier issues of the same magazine.

Faisal died on 7 September 1933 in Switzerland in somewhat suspicious circumstances[5]. The following day, his only son Prince Ghazi was installed on the throne, with some reservations on the part of Nuri al-Sa'id and Ja'far al-'Askari who favoured the elevation of Faisal's brother Zaid. On hearing of Faisal's death, Ja'far al-'Askari, who was then Minister in London, went to the Foreign Office and indicated that,

> There could possibly some difficulty about the succession of the Crown Prince, who might be considered by a section of opinion in Iraq as unfit by youth and inexperience to take the helm at this critical time.[6]

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5. The British Ambassador in Berne cited Lady Paget's letter. She was a nurse who lived in the same hotel as King Faisal. She saw King Faisal the day he died "looking particularly well", accompanied by a "comely Indian woman" with whom he had "intimate relations". Lady Paget describes King Faisal suddenly feeling ill after having dinner, and vomiting, which she attributes to "poisoning". She accuses the doctors, stating that "no adequate post-mortem examination was made as his body was embalmed with suspicious celerity" and the Indian woman disappeared the day after his death. "All these features", the Ambassador wrote, "have convinced Lady Paget that King Faisal did not meet with a natural death".
Sir H.Kennard, Berne, to G.W.Rendel, Foreign Affairs, FO371/16924/E 5519 of 14 September 1933. See also USNA 890G.00/277, 11 September 1933: 'al-Ahrar published a statement to the effect that King Faisal's death was ... suicide'.

6. Ambassador Francis Humphrys to S/S Foreign Affairs, 8.9.1933, FO 371/16924/E 5250.

Even before the death of Faisal Nuri had expressed the same opinion to the British Foreign Office[7]. In fact, however, there seemed no other alternative to Ghazi and he was thus crowned with the approval of the British Ambassador, although not without reservations:

> It looks as though there may have been some hesitation in proclaiming the Crown Prince King, as Ja'far Pasha hinted that there might be. It is too early to say that the Crown Prince is firmly on the throne.[8]

Nuri and Ja'far's relations with Ghazi and their continuing intrigues (especially those of Nuri), further undermined the position of the young King, as well as the precarious balance of the political system. However, the most serious problem was Ghazi's unstable character and inexperience which further undermined the position of the monarchy, contributed to destabilising an already enfeebled political structure and led to the Army's domination of political life between 1936 and 1941. Ghazi's character generally attracted adverse criticism both from Iraqi politicians and the diplomatic corps. The British Embassy commented:

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7. The earliest sign of a rebellion against Faisal on the part of a supposedly loyal politician was the dispute between himself and Nuri al-Sa'id over the appointment of Rashid 'Ali as Prime Minister in 1932. U.S. Legation to State Department (USN 890G.00/201 and 221 of 7.6.1932 and 27.10.1932) Hall minutes a report by Francis Humphrys on the conflict between the two: "In private conversation with me at Geneva, Nuri went even further and said that he could not again accept the premiership so long as Faisal occupied the throne. Nuri talks of Zaid rather than Ghazi to succeed King Faisal". Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs, 19.12.1932, FO.371/16903/E105.

8. Minutes by G.W.Rendel, see Ambassador Humphrys (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs,8.9.1933, FO371/16924/E5265.

> The King's (Ghazi) absorption in his private hobbies made him heedless of the welfare and the susceptibilities of his subjects, and indifferent to affairs of State which had become notorious.[9]

The U.S. Legation Report was no more complimentary:

> He has shown little initiative in matters political and he is very irregular and lax in attending even the routine duties in connection with the government. Much of his time appears taken in trifling amusements.[10]

King Ghazi's character and practices affected the running of the Government and had inescapable repercussions on the political system, creating a dangerous power vacuum:

> King Ghazi was not playing, or capable of playing, the part of monarch effectively and vigorously disturbed the balance of the constitution.[11]

His weak personality contrasted unfavourably with that of his father, and the delicate equilibrium which Faisal was able to maintain was destroyed almost immediately after Ghazi's accession. The power vacuum was filled by contending political cliques, and the office of Prime Minister became

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9. Ambassador Archibald Clark Kerr (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs,2.7.1936, FO371/20017/E4057.

10. Knabenshue to State Department 23.8.1934, USNA 890G/296. For the King's personal scandals, see the story of the murder of a personal servant of the King within the confines of the Royal Palace,Peterson to S/S Foreign Affairs, 28.6.1938, FO 371/21846/E4196.

11. Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Office, Annual Report of 1937, FO 371/21856/E794.

a coveted prize, falling to the politician most able to combine British approval with support of either the tribes or the army. The atmosphere is captured in this report from the U.S. Legation in September 1933:

> It is said that Rashid Beg al-Gailani hopes to retain the premiership in the new Cabinet, and that Nuri Pasha seems to think that he may still be able to marshall enough influence to gain it. The general consensus of opinion is that Yasin will become the new Prime Minister.[12]

A similar report from the British Embassy explains further the qualities of the Ministers and their objectives in taking office:

> The King in effect has left more of the affairs to his ministers ... and his ministers, as long as they draw their substantial salaries, spend most of their time bickering amongst themselves and allowing the affairs of the State to run more or less under the impetus imparted to them by the late King Faisal.[13]

To make matters worse, King Ghazi's weaknesses led the politicians to turn against the monarchy and further to undermine its authority and legitimacy. Nuri al-Sa'id, for example, constantly attempted to depose Ghazi and to

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12. Knabenshue to State Department 21.9.1933. USNA 890G.00/276.

13. Review of Events in 1934, prepared by the Director of Operations and Intelligence, Air Ministry, 7.2.1935, FO371/18949/E898.

replace him by his uncle Zaid or his cousin 'Abd al-Ilah or by a Crown Council[14].

After a reign of less than six years King Ghazi died on 4 April 1939 in a car accident in what were, to say the least, suspicious circumstances[15]. According to Naji Shawkat, a former premier and Minister of Interior at the time of the King's death, "Ghazi's death was a result of foul play and Nuri al-Sai'd was behind it"[16]. Ghazi's death, says Batatu, 'was one of the elements that damaged

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14. Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs,1937 Annual Report FO371/21856/E794.
The suggestion of deposing the King and replacing him by Regent (Zaid or Abd al-Ilah) or by creating a Regency Council, was often mentioned in the British Embassy and the U.S. legation correspondence, mainly at the instigation of Nuri al Sa'id. The three British Ambassadors and C.J. Edmonds did not favour Nuri's schemes to get rid of King Ghazi. A change of heart and tune took place in 1939 as King Ghazi grew more popular with the Iraqis, to the dismay of the British Ambassador, as he maintained strong links with young Army officers, had his own broadcasting station which claimed Kuwait and incited nationalist feelings. For details, see: Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs,28.6.1938, FO371/21846/E4196; 10.1.1938, FO371/21856/E305; 25.1.1939, FO371/23200/E938; 31.12.1938, FO371/23207/E281; and 1938 Annual Report, FO371/23214/E932.
Also, Knabenshue to State Department 12.11.1937, USNA 890G.00/433 and 8.3.1939, USNA 890G.00/475.

15. Batatu (1978), pp.342-344.

16. Interview with Naji Shawkat, Baghdad, October 1979. Naji's theory is supported by his brother Dr Sa'ib Shawkat, who was the coroner and a close friend of Nuri al-Sa'id. Naji adds that the fact that Nuri kept a picture of Ghazi's wrecked car in his office was a further indication of his involvement.

the moral authority of the crown beyond repair"[17]. 'Abd al-Ilah, Ghazi's cousin and brother-in-law was installed as a Regent since his son Faisal II was only 4 years old. However, 'Abd al-Ilah was also young, inexperienced, and no great improvement on his cousin, but in many ways his lack of good qualities suited the British, and Nuri al-Sa'id, since he was completely in their hands. His close association with Britain and Nuri led to a struggle between the Crown and the nationalist elements which culminated in the uprising of May 1941, leading to the flight of the Regent and Nuri from the country, and their return to power as a result of British military intervention. This always remained particularly damaging to their moral authority and credibility; as Batatu explains, it

> made them so odious among the people that, regardless of what they did afterwards, they were never able to command public confidence. Their image as servants of foreign interests and the impression that the British were in the background of their actions and policies simply would not wash.[18]

Thus the Iraqis came to despise the Regent and Nuri al-Sa'id more than the young Faisal II and the other politicians[19]. These were some of the reasons, coupled with the nature of the political system, which contributed to the alienation of the population from the political

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17. Batatu (1978), p.343.

18. Ibid., p.345.

19. As was to be demonstrated in July 1958.

process, the use of coercive measures by the government and ultimately its dependence on local vested interests and foreign support for survival. Nevertheless the various developments which have been described were important factors in forcing Jama'at al-Ahali to compromise their ideology against their will, in order to survive at all. They attempted to gather as much strength as possible and to seize all available opportunities to maximise their chances of achieving their political objectives.

3. Middle Euphrates Tribal Risings, 1934-1937

Throughout the period of the mandate and monarchy, it was a constant broad principle of British policy to support the power of the tribal shaikhs. On the one hand, this provided a counterpoise to the crown and the Baghdad politicians, since a major tribal rising would have been more than a match for the Army, and on the other, over-ambitious tribal leaders could be controlled through manipulation and tribal feuds. The shaikhs were given rights over vast tracts of land, and political and judicial powers over their tribesmen through the Tribal Civil and Criminal Disputes Regulation, first enacted by the British occupying forces in 1916 and later enshrined in the Iraqi constitution of 1925. Hence 'down to the July (1958) Revolution, Iraq would ... remain legally subject to two norms - one for the cities and one for the tribal countryside'[1].

Although Faisal in particular was strongly tempted to curb the powers of the tribal shaikhs, he also realised their value as potential allies and took no direct steps to tamper with the shaikhly structure. However, on his death in 1933, the vacuum created led to a completely new configuration of political forces, and various Baghdad politicians turned to the shaikhs for support against their

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1. Batatu (1978), p.24.

opponents, particularly after the appointment of 'Ali Jawdat's government in August 1934. Following what had now become almost traditional practice, 'Ali Jawdat dissolved parliament, created a new political party[2], and held elections in an attempt to fill the Chamber of Deputies with his own supporters. Thus the government set up:

> elaborate machinery, putting into production the periodic farce which goes under the title of general elections in Iraq. By 6th December, the elections had been completed in all liwas, and the nominees of the government, plus a few gate-crashers, who paid considerable sums, duly elected.[3]

Nevertheless, various prominent personalities were not elected, and considerable unpopularity was incurred by 'forcing on provincial constituencies a number of unknown nonentities from Baghdad, whose election had deprived men of local standing of their seats'[4]. One of those so excluded was 'Abd al-Wahid al-Hajj Sikkar, the paramount chief of the Fatlah, based in Diwaniya, who had played a prominent role in the revolution of 1920, and who was now a member of Hizb al-Ikha' al-Watani (The Party of National Brotherhood), controlled by Yasin al-Hashimi, Rashid 'Ali al-Gailani, and Hikmat Sulaiman[5].

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2. Hizb al-Wahda al-Wataniyya (Party of National Unity).

3. Review of events in 1934 by Director of Operations and Intelligence, the Air Ministry, 7.2.1935, FO371/18949/E898.

4. Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs, FO371/20010/E851; 1935 Annual Report.

5. See page 54 above.

All these leaders, besides being substantial landowners, had been associated with 'Abd al-Wahid and other tribal leaders for many years[6]. Yasin and Rashid 'Ali carried on a campaign against the exclusion of 'Abd al-Wahid and their other tribal supporters, organising a boycott of the Senate in January 1935:

> throughout the country they stimulated resentment among the tribal chiefs against the discourtesy with which they were habitually treated by government officials, and focused this discontent on 'Ali Jawdat's Cabinet. In the towns they found it easy to gather to their side a band of disappointed would-be Deputies, and the benevolent approbation of the Holy Cities was won by a subtle suggestion of sympathy with the sectarian aspirations of the Shi'ah community[7].

The sectarian aspect is important, since Shi'is could rightly claim that their representation in the Chamber of Deputies, the government, and the civil service as a whole in no way reflected their numerical strength in the country.

Rashid 'Ali and Hikmat Sulaiman held meetings with a number of disaffected shaikhs in their homes, known as the Sulaikh conferences, which also succeeded in involving Jama'at al-Ahali, particularly Ja'far Abu al-Timman,

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6. For details of the election and the subsequent tribal risings, see Macdonald, A.D., 'Political Developments in Iraq leading up to the Rising in the Spring of 1935', Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society, XXIII, 1936, pp.27-49.

7. Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S, Foreign Affairs, FO 371/20010/E851; 1935 Annual Report.

Kamil al-Chadirchi and 'Abd al-Qadir Isma'il[8]. In the end 'Abd al-Wahid and his tribal supporters began a revolt in Diwaniya which forced the resignation of 'Ali Jawdat in late February 1935, and his replacement by Jamil al-Madfa'i. This was not the outcome which the Ikha politicians had sought, and thus they continued their intrigues with 'Abd al-Wahid's al-Fatla, together with al-Akra' and al-'Azza tribes, which led to further revolts in March, which in their turn prompted al-Madfa'i's resignation.

This time the Ikha did succeed in capturing the premiership: Yasin al-Hashimi took office on 17 March,

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8. GSO Baghdad, Political Journal (al-Jarida al-Siyasiyya), para 162, 24.1.1935; para 290, 4.2.1935; para 361, 19.2.1935, and: "It may be interesting to report that a few months ago immediately after the last parliamentary elections, I received a visit from a naturalized American citizen of Syrian origin who told me that he had met Shaikh Abdul Wahid al-Haj Sukkar (Sikkar), the Paramount Shaikh of the Diwaniyah District of the middle Euphrates, who told him that he was planning a revolt against the government because of its method of conducting parliamentary elections and because of other grievances against its system of administration. He said that the Shaikh would like to know what the reaction of the United States Government would be, should he prosecute such a revolt."
Knabenshue to State Department, 4.4.1935,
USNA 890.G.00/326.

with a cabinet which included Nuri al-Sa'id, Ja'far al-'Askari, and Rashid 'Ali, but, importantly, not Hikmat Sulaiman. Clearly, however, these tactics had created a dangerous precedent. The United States Minister commented, with some justice, that 'If 'Ali Jawdat or Jamil al-Madfa'i had given orders to the Army to attack, the whole country would have been in uproar'[9]. In fact, al-Madfa'i certainly seems to have considered using the Army but the King was against it, and more significantly, the Chief of General Staff, Taha al-Hashimi, Yasin's brother, was in favour of a political solution[10]. In addition, General Bakr Sidqi, the Commander of the First Division, which was based in Diwaniya, who was strongly influenced by Hikmat Sulaiman, discouraged the use of force[11]. In such circumstances, al-Madfa'i could only hand in his resignation.

Yasin's rise to power naturally encouraged 'Abd al-Wahid to assert his authority both in Baghdad, which he entered 'more like a hero than a leader of a rebellion against the government', and against his local rivals in Diwaniya[12]. Hence, a few days after the cabinet was formed

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9. Knabenshue to State Department, 5.7.1935, USNA 890G.00/339.

10. Saleh,(1953),p.101, and Longrigg (1953), p.240.

11. Ibid., also interview with Husain Jamil.

12. "The tribal leaders having got their tails up would be difficult to handle in the future and would, either individually or collectively, defy the government in the form of armed rebellion in the event of their dissatisfaction with governmental action in their area for a failure on the part of the government to fulfil its promises." Knabenshue to State Department, 13.5.1935, USNA 890G.00/329.

Rashid 'Ali, the Minister of Interior, and Nuri al-Sa'id, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, went to Diwaniya liwa[13]. They had two tasks:

> The first was to persuade 'Abd al-Wahid and his associates to disperse; and the second, to pacify 'Abd al-Wahid's tribal enemies, who were indignant and outraged at his success. He achieved his first object without great difficulty (though it is possible that the payment of a large sum to Abdul Wahid was necessary), but he was less successful with the sheikhs who had supported the previous Governments. They felt that, as Abdul Wahid had played so prominent a part in bringing Yassin Pasha and his colleagues into office, he would enjoy great influence with the Government and would naturally use his influence to get the better of his tribal rivals and enemies. They were deeply suspicious of the new cabinet and adopted an openly hostile and threatening attitude towards the Minister of the Interior".[14]

In a crowded meeting at the administrative headquarters of al-Shamiya qadha, three shaikhs, in a speech addressed to the two Ministers, demanded no less than their resignation and that of the whole Cabinet[15]. The prophesy that Yasin and Rashid 'Ali's intrigues in inciting the tribes to revolt would prove a double-edged sword, proved uncomfortably close to reality;

> For a time at least, Iraq is likely to be faced with recalcitrant Shaikhs who, now and then, feeling the urge of their newly found power, will prove to be thorns in the flesh of the central government, much as were the feudal barons of old.[16]

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13. INA, Ministry of Interior Reports, File D/6/3,Nos.85-107.

14. Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S,Foreign Affairs,FO371/20010/E851; 1935 Annual Report.

15. INA, Ministry of Interior Reports,File D/6/3,No.105.

16. Knabenshue to State Department,4,4,1935, USNA 890G.00/326.

The anti 'Abd al-Wahid (and now anti-government) faction of the tribal leaders of Diwaniya and Nasiriya entered into agreements with the Shi'a 'ulama' of Najaf, in order to consolidate their power and protect themselves from probable government military operations. They nominated a mujtahid, Shaikh Muhammad Hasan Kashif al-Ghata', as their spokesman. In March 1935 he presented a "Shi'a Charter" which included twelve points,

> focussed on Shi'a demands for equality, vis-a-vis the Sunnis, in the matter of representation in Parliament and in the appointment of administrative officials. Secondary demands involve such questions as election reforms (direct instead of two stages), taxation, freedom of the press, land settlement, reduction of salaries of officials, enactment of laws against social and moral 'diseases', etc. , and an amnesty for "those who have participated in the present national movement".[17]

The al-Hashimi government and the country in general enjoyed a period of relative tranquility in spite of this, between March 1935 and May 1936[18]. When the government had established its authority, it embarked on passing a series of major laws and reforms through Parliament, on expenditure on capital works, amendments to the Customs Tariff Law, and loans for municipal improvements

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17. Ibid., see also Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs, FO371/18945/E2455 of 28.3.1935, and FO371/2015/E3062 of 22.5.1935. For the full text see Appendix D.

18. Although there were further outbreaks of local violence, mainly in response to the imposition of conscription, such as the Yazidi rising in Jabal Sinjar and Khalil Khushawi's revolt in Barzan. There were other riots in Kadhimain, Qurna and Rumaitha.

It also conducted a purge of the civil service, dismissing 278 civil servants for incompetence. Besides enforcing consciption, the government attempted to strengthen the armed forces and founded the Air Force. Yasin's government increased the number of parliamentary seats from 88 to 108 to enable him to reward his supporters without excluding others whose position in tribal or public life made their presence in the Chamber desirable. al-Hashimi went further than his predecessors in making Parliament more broadly representative, but no more democratic. The British Embassy, in a despatch in August 1935, welcomed Yasin's habit of seeking the approval of its staff in important matters. It reported:

> Mr. Edmonds was shown the list of candidates for the Northern liwas and was satisfied that, except in one instance, it could hardly have been improved upon. To this extent, therefore, the lessons of the recent upheaval appear to have been learned.[19]

However, the seeds which Yasin and Hikmat Sulaiman had sown did not die, and both had to reap the bitter harvest. The middle Euphrates tribes remained restless and rebellions broke out again especially in May 1936, and in April 1937. The various governments responded by employing the armed forces to extinguish these rebellions ruthlessly, which met with widespread resentment and protests from prominent people;

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19. Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs, 22.5.1936, FO371/18946/E5008.

> Numerous villages have been destroyed and large areas of crops burned. Some stories of brutality on the part of the troops are now beginning to reach Baghdad. Few prisoners have, it seems, been taken, and there are the usual rumours of the shooting out of hand of parties of surrendering tribesmen with their womenfolk.[20]

The methods and the speed employed by both governments in dealing with tribal uprisings showed the politicians in their true colours. They always rushed to use force whenever they could, rather than attempting to understand and seek out the root causes of discontent or attempt to alleviate the miserable conditions of the fallahin and to rid them from the exploitation of the shaikhs, landlords and government officials. Instead, the government not only co-operated with the exploiting class, but also enacted laws and regulations to benefit them and to enable them to exploit the peasants further.

The use of the armed forces to subdue the tribes by Yasin al-Hashimi and later by Hikmat Sulaiman, instead of resigning as Jawdat and al-Madfa'i had done earlier, brought a new dimension to an already fragmented political system. In time this practice was to lead to a virtual invitation to the Army to take direct control of the government. Bakr Sidqi was the commander of the forces which dealt so swiftly and ruthlessly in putting down the rebellious tribesmen in 1935 and 1936 which further had the effect of putting the Army and Sidqi himself in the limelight

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20. Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs, 22.5.1936, FO371/20015/E3062.

as 'saviour' of the national honour. More importantly, it proved again that the Army was the real power in the land. The involvement of the Army in internal conflicts brought home the realisation of the need for a stronger and better government to lead the country, and demonstrated the weakness of the political system. Furthermore, the fact that the government had directed them against their own countrymen was a source of resentment for some Army commanders, officers, and the rank and file[21], and the public as a whole was deeply critical:

> Many people have been shocked by the loss of life and the general devastation caused by the present Euphrates operations.[22]

One incident affecting Bakr Sidqi gives some indication of his thoughts during the period immediately before the coup of 1936. In May 1936, after Sidqi had put down a tribal insurrection in Rumaitha, Rashid 'Ali, who was Minister of Interior, came out to congratulate the troops, and gave a speech, ending with the words, "now I can be proud of the Iraq Army". To this Bakr Sidqi replied, in the presence of several officers, "On the contrary, one should not be proud of an Army which kills its own countrymen,... the real goal of the Army is a much nobler cause"[23].

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21. Ambassador (Baghdad), to S/S Foreign Affairs, FO371/20010/E851; 1935 Annual Report.

22. Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs, 22.5.1936, FO371/20015/E3062.

23. al-Mallah (1975), pp.180-1; the story was told to the author by General Fu'ad 'Arif.

Chapter VI

The Coup of 1936

1. The Preparation of the Coup

We shall now turn to the role played by Jama'at al-Ahali in co-operation with Bakr Sidqi and the Army in preparing and executing the coup of 29 October 1936 and analyse developments after the formation of the coup government[1]. During the last part of 1934, Hikmat Sulaiman became a member of the executive committee of al-Sha'biya secret society[2]. This committee formulated a pledge similar to that of the Fabian Society which was to be taken by all full members, and members[3] of the committee were assigned different sectors of society in which to recruit new members. Thus Ja'far Abu al-Timman was to contact members of his former party, while al-Chadirchi, Ibrahim, and Hadid were

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1. For details of the 1936 coup d'état, see al-Hasani,'A., Asrar al-Inqilab (The secrets of the coup),Saida,1937; al-Mubarak,S., Inqilab 1936 fi al-'Iraq (1936 coup d'état in Iraq),M.A. unpublished Thesis,University of Baghdad,1973; Tarbush,M., (1978); Kopietz,H., "The Use of German and British Archives in the Study of the Middle East: The Iraqi Coup d'Etat of 1936", in The Integration of Modern Iraq, edited by Kelidar,'A., London 1979, pp.46-62.

2. The Executive Committee was composed of Ja'far Abu 'al-Timman (President), Hikmat Sulaiman, Kamil al-Chadirchi, 'Abd al-Fattah Ibrahim (Secretary), Muhammad Hadid (Treasurer) and 'Abd al-Qadir Ismai'l.

3. al-Chadirchi,(1970),p.32. The Society will be discussed in detail in the section on al-Ahali's role in Iraqi politics in Chapter IX..

were to contact the young, the educated and the civil servants. Hikmat Sulaiman was given the task of contacting Army officers and of establishing the military wing of the society. Bakr Sidqi and Muhammad 'Ali Jawad were the first recruits and they became the connection between Hikmat and the Army[4]. In their turn Sidqi and Jawad contacted other Army and Air Force officers such as Shakir al-Wadi, Baha' al-Din Nuri and later 'Abd al-Latif Nuri[5].

The military organisation was very secret; not only did the society's central committee not meet the military members, they did not know their names, not even Hikmat. But they were informed that all the Army officers had dutifully taken the pledge[6]. At this stage Jama'at al-Ahali

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4. Interview with Hadid; see also al-Chadirchi (1970),p.32. (Jama'at al Ahali were aware of Hikmat Sulaiman's close friendship with Bakr Sidqi).

5. al-Chadirchi (1970),p.32.

6. Ibid., An interesting and controversial circumstance took place when Bakr Sidqi was due to take the oath of loyalty to the Society. The following is an account by Ibrahim and Hadid, who were present: "On the evening when Bakr Sidqi was supposed to take the Society's pledge in front of the Executive Committee, Bakr Sidqi and Hikmat Sulaiman entered the Chadirchi's guest room, where Abu 'al-Timman, al-Chadirchi, Hadid and Ibrahim had been waiting. When Sidqi saw Ibrahim and Hadid, he reacted nervously, sat a short while, then took Hikmat to a corner, whispered in Turkish, then excused himself and left the house. Hikmat afterwards declared that Bakr Sidqi had taken the pledge in front of him. Ibrahim protested this ploy, which confirmed his belief that Bakr Sidqi was not genuinely sincere in joining the society and in believing in its ideology, and that Jama'at al-Ahali had made a fatal mistake in working with the Army. Hadid explains Sidqi's reaction by alleging that he was suspicious of Ibrahim."

adamantly supported the removal of Yasin's government by any possible means, "but the idea of a military coup d'état was never mentioned". For Hikmat Sulaiman and Bakr Sidqi, on the other hand, the idea of employing the Army to come to power was never very far from their minds; it had been discussed and considered earlier than October 1936[7]. According to the U.S. Minister, Hikmat was "Well versed in revolutionary intrigue and thus well qualified to organize the military coup d'état to overthrow Yasin"[8].

Bakr Sidqi shared many of Hikmat's political views and particularly his admiration for Kemalist Turkey. He may even have been influenced by other examples:

> His (Bakr Sidqi's) decision to act against the constitutional power must have been the result of rapid thinking - quite possibly he was influenced by General Franco's coup in Spain (the educated Iraqi follows closely the course of world events)".[9]

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7. The British Ambassador, in a despatch after the coup, wrote: "Yasin said he had made one big mistake. He had not trusted his own judgement. Two months before the event, the Mutasarrif of Diwaniyah had warned him that Bakr Sidqi was collecting ammunition as fast as he could and that he was obviously up to no good". Sir Archibald Clark-Kerr to S/S Foreign Affairs: 9.12.1936, FO371/20015/E7919.

8. Knabenshue to State Department: 24.12.1936,USNA 890G.00/395. (Hikmat was a half-brother of Mahmud Shawkat Pasha, the leader of the Committee of Union and Progress which had deposed Sultan 'Abd al-Hamid in April 1909.)

9. Minutes by J.G.Ward: Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs: 29.10.1936, FO371/20013/E6784.

The conditions for the coup were most favourable after Sidqi's return from a two month trip to Europe early in October[10], when he became acting Chief of General Staff. Taha al-Hashimi had left Iraq on an extended trip to England, Germany and Czechoslovakia, and then went to Turkey at the head of a delegation to the Turkish Army manoeuvres. Taha was accompanied by Muhammad 'Ali Jawad, the Air Force Commander and close friend of Bakr Sidqi, but he later returned to Iraq in the middle of October which may raise questions of earlier co-operation and planning[11]. The Army was preparing for its own annual manoeuvres (from 3rd to 10th November) which Bakr used as a cover to deploy units of the Army to the vicinity of Baghdad. On 23rd October, Bakr approached General 'Abd al-Latif Nuri, Commander of the First Division, and convinced him to join forces with him in the intended coup d'état,[12] and met with him again on 25 October 1936 to complete the planning for the coup[13]. Meanwhile, Hikmat

10. Minutes by J.G.Ward: Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs:2.11.1936, FO371/20013/E6940. "I have heard from the intelligence branch of the Air Ministry that General Baker Sidqi spent rather a mysterious holiday in Europe between July and Sept. of this year. It is known for certain that he was in Prague(like other Iraqi army leaders, he has doubtless been taking bribes from the Jewish agents of Czechslavakia's armament firms who abound in the Middle East, and was taking the opportunity of establishing even closer "relations" at the fountain-head".

11. al-Hashimi,Taha, Mudhakkarat (Memoirs),Beirut 1967,pp.130-144

12. al-Hasani (1974),Vol.IV,p.211. Bakr Sidqi heard a rumour that General 'Abd al-Latif Nuri was going to commit suicide out of desperation.(mainly financial).Bakr contacted him telling him "instead of wasting yourself, you should support the coup and you will get what you want". Nuri agreed to this offer. al-Chadirchi (1970),p.43; also Interview with Jamil.

13. Yazbak,Y., al-Muharrirun (The Liberators), Beirut,1937, pp.100-1. Also al-Hasani (1974), vol.IV.

broke the news to Ja'far Abu al-Timman and Kamil al-Chadirchi. Hikmat told them "The army is going to stage a coup. Either you support it, or the army leaders will seek the support and cooperation of other political groups"[14].

Jama'at al-Ahali held a meeting to discuss these critical developments, and to discuss their position on what Hikmat described as a virtual fait accompli. He pointed out that co-operation with the Army would give the group a major opportunity to implement their goals and objectives. To diminish their fears of a possible military dictatorship he told them that the army would return to its barracks as soon as the coup had succeeded[15], that Bakr Sidqi was only interested in strengthening the

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14. Hadid was in Mosul at the time and was informed by Kamil upon his return; Isma'il was not informed of the coup until the night of 28.10.1936. (Interview with Isma'il and Hadid). Ibrahim discontinued meeting Jama'at al-Ahali and did not know anything about the coup (Interview with Ibrahim).

15. Hikmat Sulaiman could have been sincere in this promise, for he repeated this point on numerous occasions to the British Ambassador;although the latter remained doubtful, he relayed the messages to the Foreign Office. In one despatch he writes: "Hikmat has told me that at all costs he will oblige the army to resume its normal and appropriate place in the policy of the Country, and that he himself will not submit to any form of domination by Bakir Sidqi". Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs, 4.11.1936, FO371/20014/E7147.

army and wished simply to become Chief of General Staff. To prove the good intentions of the Army, Jama'at al-Ahali would be given the responsibility of choosing the cabinet, as well as the composition of the letter to the King demanding the dismissal of Yasin's cabinet, and the bayan (proclamation) announcing the coup, which Bakr Sidqi and 'Abd al-Latif Nuri would sign, as commanders of the 'Reform Forces'[16]. This news posed a dilemma for Jama'at al-Ahali for it required a binding and important decision, which was in fact to determine the future of the group, as well as that of Iraq.

Hence they had two clear choices - either to support the Army or to decline to participate. They were certainly anxious to remove the Hashimi government, which had resorted to severe measures to harass the opposition. Moreover, it seemed likely to last for a long time, and there seemed no hope of changing it by democratic means. Another important factor was that all the leading members, especially Kamil al-Chadirchi, whose dislike of Yasin was unrivalled[17], had grown tired of staying in the background of the political system and were eager to prove their own

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16. Interview with Hadid and Isma'il; al-Chadirchi (1970), p.43. Jamil, 'Bawakir', al-Thaqafa al-Jadida, VIII, August 1978, pp.91-92. al-Hasani (1974), Vol.IV, p.216.

17. For details of the animosity between the two, see the section on al-Chadirchi's joining al-Ahali. Chapter VIII.

administrative ability. If Jama'at al-Ahali did not lend their support to the Army then they would not have a chance to share power, since the Army was determined to engineer the coup in any case, and would simply draw support from another group. On the other hand, if they supported the Army and took part in the government, they might risk being dominated by a military dictatorship. Rather optimistically, Jama'at al-Ahali tended to dismiss this, not only because of Bakr Sidqi's promises, but because they saw themselves as a well organised group, resembling a political party to a certain extent,with a platform and a solid ideology. They had an active membership and enjoyed wide popular support, and would certainly be strengthened if they could control the most important posts in the Cabinet. They felt confident and seem to have underestimated Bakr Sidqi; even if he were to develop dictatorial tendencies in the future, they argued, he was only a single army general, with no political ideology and no power base. The odds seemed likely to give them the chance to dominate the political situation and an opportunity to implement the ideology of 'Popularism'. For these reasons, Jama'at al-Ahali decided to support the coup and began preparing for it. The meetings were a mixture of excitement, apprehension and fear, for as Iraq was experiencing its first army coup, its possible consequences were not readily comprehended by the participants[18].

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18. Interviews with Hadid, Isma'il, Ibrahim and Jamil. See also al-Chadirchi,(1970), p.44.

Hadid wrote the drafts of the letters and the proclamation which were to be signed by Sidqi and 'Abd al-Latif Nuri[19]. They were given to Colonel Shakir al-Wadi, who was acting as a liaison officer between Sidqi, Jama'at al-Ahali and the pro-coup Army and Air Force officers in Baghdad[20]. On the eve of the coup, 28th October, Jama'at al-Ahali held a final meeting, and decided to meet again at 6 a.m. the next morning[21]. The signal for the coup would be the dropping of the proclamation leaflets (Manshur) over Baghdad by Air Force aeroplanes, which would prompt Isma'il and some young army officers to distribute the same leaflets in various parts of the city[22] as well as giving a signal to Hikmat to drive to the Palace to present the King with Bakr Sidqi and 'Abd al-Latif Nuri's letter demanding the resignation of the Hashimi Cabinet and the appointment of a government "from the people, headed by Hikmat Sulaiman"[23]. At about 11 a.m.

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19. The bayan (Proclomation) addressed to the noble Iraqi people, and signed by General Bakr Sidqi, Commander of the National Reform Force, is in INA, File J 1,doc.No.170. The letter addressed to the King, and signed by General Bakr Sidqi, Commander of the Second division, and General 'Abd al-Latif Nuri, Commander of the First division, is in INA, File J 1, doc.No.171.

20. Interview with Hadid; also al-Hasani (1974),Vol.IV,p.216.

21. Yazbak,(1936),p.114. al-Haris. 30.11.1936. Quoted al-Daraji (1976),p.427.

22. Interview with Isma'il.

23. Yasin, Rashid 'Ali, and especially Nuri al-Sa'id, accused King Ghazi of "being party to the coup".Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs:4.11.1936, FO371/20014/E7147. This seems unlikely, although it is "Just possible that Ghazi had shown an encouraging attitude to the plotters". Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs:5.11.1936, FO 371/20014/E7181.

a number of bombs were dropped on the serai. Meanwhile, an assessment of the situation was taking place at the Royal Palace by the King, Yasin, Nuri al-Sa'id, Ja'far al-Askari and the British Ambassador. The outcome was the resignation of the Cabinet and the appointment of Hikmat, and Ja'far al-Askari's courageous if foolhardy decision to go and meet the advancing army, which resulted in his murder.

At 4 p.m. the victorious army entered Baghdad and at 6 p.m. a Cabinet headed by Hikmat Sulaiman officially took office. The composition of the Cabinet had been deliberated before the coup and an agreement had been reached between Jama'at al-Ahali and the Army, through Hikmat Sulaiman, who was to become the Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior, to include Ja'far Abu al-Timman (Finance) and Kamil al-Chadirchi (Economics). The Ministry of Defence was left for Bakr Sidqi, who nominated General 'Abd al-Latif Nuri. al-Chadirchi's influence is evident in the formation of this Cabinet; he nominated Yusuf 'Izz al-Din, a member of the Society and one of his closest friends, to the Ministry of Education, Naji al-Asil, a supporter of the Ahali literary society and a friend of Kamil's to Foreign Affairs and supported Salih Jabr's appointment to the Ministry of Justice[24]. Sulaiman wanted to include Nuri al-Sa'id but the murder of Ja'far made this difficult. C.J. Edmonds wrote:

24. Salih Jabr consulted Yasin al-Hashimi before deciding to join the Cabinet and Yasin encouraged him to accept, "to protect their lives". al-Hasani (1974),Vol.IV, p.237.

> Among other things he said that he would have liked to include Nuri Pasha, but in the circumstances Nuri was bound to refuse. He could therefore not expose himself to a rebuff.[25]

Hikmat Sulaiman also wanted to include Nasrat al-Farisi, Jamil al-Madfa'i and Naji Shawkat, but they declined[26]. The coup went as planned except for Ja'far al-'Askari's murder, which sent the other politicians and former ministers running for their lives[27].

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25. Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs:17.11.1936, FO 371/20015/E7625. Hikmat Sulaiman remained persistent in his attempts to include Nuri al-Sa'id in his Cabinet from the first day of the coup until he resigned; See Knabenshue to State Department, 24.12.1936; USNA 890G.00/395; 4.2.1937, USNA 890G.00/39; 10.6.1937, USNA 890G.00/412. Also Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs: 15.11.1936, FO 371/20014/E7318. Hadid denied any consideration by Jama'at al-Ahali, before or after the coup, of including Nuri al-Sa'id in the cabinet, though Nasrat al-Farisi and Jamil al-Madfa'i had been considered.

26. Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs: 17.11.1936, FO 371/20015/E7625. See also Shawkat, N.,(1974),pp.301-2.

27. Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs:30.10.1936, FO 371/20013/E6805; 31.10.1936, FO 371/20013/E6817; and Ambassador (Damascus) to S/S Foreign Affairs:31.10.1936, FO 371/20013/E6819. Yasin, Rashid 'Ali and Jamil al-Madfa'i went to Syria. Nuri al-Sa'id was flown by a Royal Air Force plane to Egypt.
The British Ambassador warned the new Prime Minister against the assassination of these politicians and arrangements were taken to protect their lives until they left Iraq. Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs, 17.11.1936, FO 371/20015/E7625. For details of Bakr Sidqi's attempts to murder these politicians, see al-Hasani (1974),Vol.IV, pp.236-7.

Hikmat Sulaiman's government settled into power in the customary way. One of their first priorities was to establish the security they needed for survival, and they began by setting up a good working relationship with the British Embassy. Muhammad Hadid says that the group discussed possible British reactions to the coup beforehand and it was decided that Hikmat Sulaiman, who was on good terms with C.J. Edmonds, should in some way prepare him for what was to come in order to soothe the British and to prevent any quick military reaction which might smother the coup in its infancy. Britain always feared any abrupt change, and had succeeded in building a working relationship with Yasin al-Hashimi's government; furthermore, they had become wary of Bakr Sidqi ever since the Assyrian incident. This explains Hikmat Sulaiman's attempts to meet with Edmonds the day before the coup. The expectation of a swift reaction on Britain's part was well founded, as British troops in Egypt were put on alert the day of the coup, which further prompted the new government to make friendly gestures to the British Embassy[28].

In three separate despatches to the Foreign Office the British Ambassador stressed Hikmat Sulaiman's desire to maintain good relations with Britain.

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28. See Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs: 2.11.1936, FO 371/20013/E6825.

> I went to him, I confess, full of prejudice, and I found myself, somewhat to my dismay, disarmed by his obvious desire to be friendly and by the earnestness and the apparent sincerity with which he begged for my support. ... So far the Prime Minister has shown every wish to be as friendly if not friendlier, than his predecessors.

This was followed by a report on the new cabinet's policy and Hikmat Sulaiman's attitude towards the British government and the Treaty. The Ambassador wrote:

> So far as we are concerned, his (Hikmat's) attitude has been more than correct. He has gone out of his way to give satisfaction and to declare his friendship. He has accepted and acted upon every suggestion I have made to him. He has assured me that he will honour the Treaty of 1930, the railway convention and all other agreements concluded between His Majesty's Government and Iraq.[29]

The reason for Britain's anxiety and the need to soothe it seems to stem from the fact that the British Embassy's intelligence sources,as well as the Iraq Government, were taken completely by surprise. The U.S. Legation reported:

> The complete surprise which accompanied the final (sic) coup d'état in October 1936, was convincing evidence that only a very limited number of persons were in the confidence of Hikmat Sulaiman and Bakir Sidqi. British political agents who have developed a fine network for gathering information were entirely unaware of what was taking place. The British Military Mission in Iraq, most of whose personnel was with the Iraqi army on manoeuvres at the time of the coup d'état, was likewise unaware of what was developing. The secrecy of its preparation, the cleverness of its organisation and the swiftness of its execution astounded everyone, even the Army itself.[30]

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29. Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs:2.11.1936, FO 371/20014/E7145; 15.11.1936,E7378;4.11.1936,E7147.

30. Knabenshue to State Department:24.12.1936, USNA 890G.00/395.

The new government was welcomed by the progressives and leftists in Iraq, but the Arab nationalists were suspicious and in fact opposed it[31]. To deepen their suspicions, the change was welcomed among the minorities[32].

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31. The Arab Nationalists did not welcome the coup, not only because they had supported Yasin, but because it would "probably result in a setback to Pan Arabism. The army leaders are Turkish trained, many are not Arabs at all and they undoubtedly look toward Turkey for inspiration". Minute by J.G.Ward, 30.10.1936, FO 371/20013/E6797. Another despatch described "Hikmat's indifference to Pan-Arab ideals". Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs: 4.11.1936, FO 371/20014/E7147. In July 1937, Sir A. Clark Kerr, reported: "His (Hikmat's) desire to dispel the widespread (and quite true) impression that he did not care a hang for Pan-Arabs". Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs:24.7.1937, FO 371/20795/E4455.
Here the ethnic and sectarian origins of the members of the cabinet are of interest, since Hikmat's ministry was the first not to be dominated by Sunni Arabs from Baghdad and Mosul:

Hikmat Sulaiman	Turk
Kamil al-Chadirchi	Arabized Turk
Yusuf 'Izz al-Din	Kurd
Ja'far Abu al-Timman	Shi'i Arab
Salih Jabr	Shi'i Arab
Naji al-Asil	Sunni Arab) the weakest members
'Abd al-Latif Nuri	Sunni Arab) of the cabinet
Bakr Sidqi	Kurd, GCS of the army and obviously the most powerful.

32. Minutes by J.G.Ward, 29.10.1936, FO 371/20013/E6784, also Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs: 15.11.1936, FO 371/20014/E7378.

The new government's supporters organised a huge demonstration, "the largest demonstration Baghdad had ever seen"[33], supporting the coup and demanding reforms.

The government immediately turned its attention to the civil and military services, retiring and transferring Yasin's relatives and protégés, and replacing them with their own supporters; Hadid was promoted Director General of Revenues and Jamil appointed Director of Propaganda and Publication. Isma'il refused a high position in the government and went back to his favourite job as Editor of al-Ahali newspaper[34]. Ibrahim was offered jobs by

33. The demonstrators held a meeting at the al-Haidarkhana Mosque where Muhammad Salih al-Qazzaz and Muhammad Mahdi al-Jawahiri delivered inflammatory speeches and recited poems supporting the coup. al-Ahali 22.11.1936 also Isma'il, Yusuf, Inqilab 1936 (1936 coup d'état), Baghdad 1936, pp.77-78. Also Khairi, S. Min Tarikh Haraka al-Thawriyya al-Mu'asira fi'l-'Iraq Pt.I. 1920-1958 (The History of the Modern Revolutionary Movement in Iraq, Pt.I,1920-1958),Baghdad 1974, p.69. Khairi puts the size of the demonstration at 50,000 persons and says that the Iraqi Communist Party organised and led the demonstrators, who were shouting anti-fascist slogans which caused the German and Italian Legations to submit protests.

34. Interview with Hadid, Jamil and Isma'il; see also al-Tariq, 5.11.1936 and al-Ahali newspaper which reappeared on 2.11.1936.

by Ja'far Abu al-Timman and Hikmat Sulaiman, but declined and remained a secondary-school teacher[35].

Bakr Sidqi was appointed Chief of General Staff, and Muhammad 'Ali Jawad was made Director of the Iraqi Air Force. A new Mutasarrif of Baghdad, a new Director General of Police, and a new Amin al-Asima (Mayor) of Baghdad were appointed. Rustum Haidar resigned as Chief of the Royal Diwan and was replaced by Ibrahim Kamal.

The Government announced an extensive programme (see Appendix E) broadcast by Ja'far Abu al-Timman, which was summarised by the Prime Minister for the British Ambassador in a confidential conversation: it included:

(a) The release of all prisoners sentenced by court martial under the late government.

(b) The break-up of large estates now leased to tribal shaikhs and distribution of land to the peasantry.

(c) Checking discrimination against racial and religious groups and minorities.

(d) Restoring the freedom of the press.

(e) Stamping out nepotism.

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35. Ibrahim was visited by Hikmat and Ja'far after the success of the coup, and Isma'il was approached with the offer of a job which he delined. Ibrahim sent a letter addressed to Kamil al-Chadirchi criticising the Ahali involvement in the Army coup, which destroyed the democratic principles of al-Sha'biya and would result in grievous consequences on the group. Ibrahim held Kamil responsible and predicted that he would pay dearly for his opportunism. (Interview with Ibrahim).

The Prime Minister indicated to the British Ambassador that "he had little sympathy with grandiose Pan-Arab schemes"[36].

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36. J.G. Ward commented on the government's programme when it was announced:
"This is a typical over-ambitious programme, such as is mainly designed to impress the Iraqi public at home. The vague generalities will probably amount to little in practice."
Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs: 11.12.1936, FO 371/20015/E7808. See also 31.10.1936, FO 371/20013/E6906.

2. Execution of the Coup

To local observers, Yasin al-Hashimi's government seemed "strongly entrenched and (will be) hard to shift ... unless something particularly serious should occur, he will remain as Prime Minister for some time"[1]. The government had taken all the measures necessary to enable itself "to endure for a long spell of office" and Yasin himself had anticipated ten years[2], Until the very day of the coup which toppled it, Yasin's government seemed to have succeeded in consolidating itself on all fronts and in establishing its authority where previous governments had failed. The British Ambassador, in a despatch to his government, assessed the apparent strength of Yasin's government; he wrote:

> The partnership of Yasin and Nuri, so long as it held together, seemed to be unassailable from without, in that it kept in check the swing of influences which had discomforted governments in the past. The tribes were calmed and quiescent. The already diminished powers of the palace had been almost destroyed by the crisis of last June[3]. The opposition seemed insignificant and inarticulate.[4]

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1. Knabenshue to State Department: 5.3.1936, USNA 890G.00/362.

2. Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs: 17.5.1936, FO 371/20013/E6085.

3. In which the King's sister (Princess 'Azza) eloped with an Italian waiter. See Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs: 24.5.1936, FO 371/20016/E3089.

4. Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs: 4.11.1936, FO 371/20014/E7147.

Yasin's strength was also drawn from the Army, mainly the strong Pan-Arab faction led by Colonel Salah al-Din al-Sabbagh. The British Ambassador continued his report:

> Yasin had seemed to draw a great part of his strength from the Army. His brother was at its head. It had always been ready to do his bidding, and it had done it well. Upon it he had spent almost a fourth part of the income from the State. He had pushed forward and pampered its senior generals.[5]

Yasin had succeeded in gaining the confidence and support of Arab nationalists inside Iraq and in the Arab world, and also had the general approval of the British authorities[6]. However, his strength and popularity was in fact somewhat illusory. He became ruthless in dealing with any opposition activity, and suppressed 'all newspapers which had the temerity to publish even the slightest criticism of the government'[7].

Furthermore, the government rapidly became notorious for its maladministration, corruption, and bribery. The American Minister reported:

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5. Ibid.

6. Knabenshue to State Department: 24.12.1936, USNA 890G.00/395.
Yasin also secured the admiration of the British Ambassador, Sir Archibald Clark Kerr.

7. al-Ahali, Sawt al-Ahali, al-Mabda', al-Bayan, al-Tariq, al-'Alam al-'Arabi, and al-Haqq.

> numerous government officials dismissed on one pretext or another were replaced by the friends of Yasin and his colleagues. Large tracts of public lands were apportioned among the members of the group in power and their friends.
> It is alleged that large sums of money from public funds were distributed as bribes to gain the friendship and support of various tribal shaikhs. The construction of Yasin, Nuri Sa'id and Tahsin Kadri, Master of Ceremonies at the Royal Palace, of what, to the local people, appeared to be excessively palatial residences, which in their minds was an outstanding and visible sign of some form of financial dishonesty, very likely at the expense of the public.
> In addition to these disturbing factors which were fermenting discontent, Yasin seems to have commenced to suffer from megalomania.[8]

The Minister of Interior, Rashid 'Ali al-Gailani, increased the number of secret police as well as authorising widespread investigation and surveillance of members of the opposition, especially Jam'at al-Ahali and the Communists[9], and the arrest and trial of persons accused of complicity in Communist activities[10]. The government also prepared an amendment to the Baghdad Penal Code with the aim of facilitating the arrest of political dissidents, thus creating a climate of virtual dictatorship which coincided with the violent suppression of the tribal risings by the armed forces. Finally, Yasin committed the fatal

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8. Knabenshue to State Department:24.12.1936,USNA.890G.00/395.

9. This secret police surveillance is clearly documented in the personal files of the leaders of Jama'at al-Ahali in the General Security Office, q.v.;see also al-Jarida al-Siyasiya. As a result of this activity Isma'il and 11 others were arrested and brought to trial.

10. Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs: 15.4.1936, FO 371/20013/E2507.

mistake of excluding Hikmat Sulaiman from his cabinet, which ultimately encouraged Sulaiman to lead Jama'at al-Ahali into a conspiracy with Bakr Sidqi to carry out a coup d'état.

Yasin's intention of staying in office for ten years, caused a

> mild sensation in Baghdad, where the spectre of Yasin as dictator again reared its head, and gave his opponents an excuse for contending that he was usurping the King's place. Hikmat Sulaiman was heard to make a caustic comment to the effect that from now on he presumed that the mot d'ordre would be changed, as far as the Prime Minister was concerned, from "Vive le Roi" to "Vive le Moi".[11]

Yasin's ambitions meant to Hikmat Sulaiman and other opposition politicians that they would be out of office for ten years, if not for ever, and thus Jama'at al-Ahali in general and Hikmat Sulaiman in particular, resorted in desperation to the Army and to the use of force, for Yasin's government left no hope that change might be achieved democratically[12].

In the same way, Bakr Sidqi, who had been Hikmat's intimate friend and confidant since 1933, felt that

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11. Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs:15.4.1936, FO 371/20013/E6085.

12. Interview with Hadid, al-Daraji (1976), p.419, and al-Chadirchi (1970), pp.39-40.

his ambitions would not be realised as long as Yasin remained in power, since the latter's brother, Taha, was secure as Chief of Staff. Besides, Yasin's increasing dependence on the pan-Arab officers and their gradual promotion to key positions weakened Bakr's position within the Army. He also felt that he had not been adequately rewarded for his part in putting down the tribal risings, which had been instrumental in ensuring the continuation of Yasin's government. This, coupled with his disapproval of Taha al-Hashimi caused him such frustration that he submitted his resignation from the army in July 1936[13]. Rashid 'Ali counselled Yasin to reject the resignation, contrary to Nuri's advice, and Bakr was eventually persuaded to remain at his post[14].

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13. Apparently he was not satisfied with Taha al-Hashimi's organisation and policies, which created a "skeleton or paper army, making it appear that there were four divisions while in fact there were only sufficient officers, men and administrative staff for two divisions". Knabenshue to State Department: 24.12.1936, USNA 890G.00/395.

14. Nuri sent a telegram from Teheran, where he was negotiating the Iraqi-Persian border agreement, urging Yasin to accept Sidqi's resignation and informing him that Bakr was not to be trusted. He emphasized that Bakr Sidqi had been trained by British Intelligence in Iraq;(see al-Qaisi (1976) quoting the unpublished memoirs of Rufa'il Butti), which was confirmed by British Intelligence after the coup; Minutes by J.G.Ward, in 15.12.1936, FO 371/20015/E7790, stated that: "The A.M. (S/Ldr. Jope Slade) states that Bakir Sidqi was employed by the British military as an agent on the Turkish 'frontier' after the war. It might be worth telling this to the Ambassador".

The Opposition to al-Hashimi's Government

Although Hikmat Sulaiman was excluded from the al-Hashimi cabinet, he remained, at least for a while, on good terms with Yasin and Rashid 'Ali. He even held a dinner to celebrate Yasin's new government to which he invited many politicians and tribal shaikhs[15]. He was even prepared to go further, and tried to press Jama'at al-Ahali into abstaining from being too critical of Yasin and his government in Sawtal-Ahali newspaper, which was permitted to appear on 18th April 1935. However, the paper was suppressed on 10th May because it criticised government's handling of a tribal rising in Rumaitha, and this date marks the beginning of the open breach between Jama'at al-Ahali and Yasin's government.

Although he had been a member of the Executive Committee of the al-Sha'biya secret society since late 1934., Hikmat continued to be somewhat indecisive in his opposition to Yasin's government. He changed tactics when he returned from Turkey in the autumn of 1935, when he began to express his open admiration for Kemalist Turkey and to attack the government. He made constant comparisons between Iraq and Turkey and stressed that reforms should be carried out by a responsible government and a progressive administration. Only at this stage did he become active in co-ordinating and organising opposition within

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15. al-Chadirchi,(1970), p.36.

Jama'at al-Ahali and with the rest of the disgruntled politicians[16].

In April 1936, Jama'at al-Ahali published another paper, al-Bayan, under Hikmat's ownership. Its second issue contained severe criticisms of the government for accepting the railway transfer agreement, and the paper was suppressed for a month[17]. At the same time, Ja'far Abu al-Timman presented a petition to the King protesting against the government's policies, asking him to "put a limit to the government's aggravations and to appoint compassionate officials who care for the people"[18]. He also published a letter addressed to the 'Iraqi people' criticising the practices of Yasin's administration and calling for a truly representative government[19]. His protest letter was followed by another signed by many different politicians, protesting against "government

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16. al-Daraji,(1976),pp.402-3. Hikmat Sulaiman published three articles on this subject in al-Bilad, 15, 16, 17 December 1935.

17. al-Bayan, 7.4.1936. Also, Knabenshue to State Department, 8.4.1936, USNA 890G. C/76. See al-Daraji (1976),p.406.

18. al-Chadirchi managed to get this letter published in a Syrian newspaper (INA,File D/14,No.32). For this he was arrested and would have stood trial but for the personal intervention of Bakr Sidqi, who managed to get the case dismissed. Interviews with Jamil, Hadid and Nasir al-Chadirchi.

19. INA File D/14. Doc.Nos. 38 and 39.

policies and their severity (in dealing with the citizens) which have caused many unwarranted deaths"[20]. The issue of al-Bayan prepared for 14 May contained a blistering attack on the government, but before Jama'at al-Ahali had the chance to distribute it, the police moved in and seized all issues, and not one copy was put into circulation. In consequence al-Bayan was suppressed again for a year[21]. Ja'far Abu al-Timman and Hikmat Sulaiman presented a protest to the King on 16th May 1936, complaining that "these harsh measures taken by Yasin's government have never been practised before"[22].

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20. INA File D/14. Doc.No.29. The petition was signed by the following politicians:
Jamil al-Madfa'i, Maulud Mukhlis, Naji al-Suwaidi, Hikmat Sulaiman, Fakhri al-Jamil, Hamdi al-Pachachi, 'Abd al-Aziz al-Qassab, Muhammad Ridha al-Shabibi, Da'ud al-Sa'di, Jamal Baban, Rashid al-Khuja, 'Abd al-Rahman al-Ni'ma, Ibrahim al-Urfali, Hussun Salim, and one other signature.

21. Knabenshue to State Department: 28.5.1936, USNA 890G.00/366. See also al-Daraji (1976),p.416.

22. INA, File D/14, Document No.40.

Sawt al-Ahali reappeared on 12th August 1936, after a year's suspension, with another attack on the government's handling of the railway agreement.

> Early in the morning (the police) raided the paper's offices and confiscated all the remaining copies of the issue. Hikmat Sulaiman had, however, secreted a certain number and he himself sold them in the streets. However that may be, a few copies were smuggled out, and were to be had in the bazaar at 1s. each. Sawt al-Ahali was promptly suspended for a further year.[23]

Once again Jama'at al-Ahali sent a letter of protest to the King, signed by Ja'far Abu al-Timman, Hikmat Sulaiman and Kamil al-Chadirchi[24]. A few days later Ja'far and Hikmat had an audience with the King where they also protested against the action[25].

The ineffectiveness of Jama'at al-Ahali's attacks on Yasin's government, coupled with their impatience to put their own programme into effect, seem almost inevitably to have pushed them closer to Bakr Sidqi, then the strongest general in the Army[26]. This ultimately had the effect of compromising their ideology and principles and their belief

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23. Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs: 27.8.1936, FO 371/20013/E5650.

24. INA, File D/14, Document No.113.

25. Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs: 27.8.1936, FO 371/20013/E5650.

26. Knabenshue to State Department: 24.12.1936, USNA 890 G.00/395.

in the democratic process, besides being against the wishes of Ibrahim and Hadid. For Bakr the association must have seemed highly advantageous, since his own chances of promotion were slim, and his position more precarious than ever. Yasin al-Hashimi was becoming increasingly dependent on the young Pan-Arab faction in the Army, which encouraged Bakr to seek an identifiable and reputable political group to provide him with both cover and support. Hence both Bakr and Hikmat succeeded in coming under the banner of Jama'at al-Ahali, and took advantage of its popularity to take power for themselves[27]. In Clark Kerr's words:

> At the same time I am advised that he (Bakr Sidqi) could not have ventured upon his march on Baghdad with any hope of success unless he had been sure of the support of such men as Hikmat Sulaiman and Ja'far abu Timman, who could carry with them a large volume of public opinion. But I confess that I do not at present think that much comfort may be drawn from this. Bakr Sidqi may well have seen in co-operating with these two good men a passing means of advancing his own career, which, broadly speaking, began with the grizzly triumph of Simel [Summayl] moved on to still further bloody glories on the Euphrates and has now come to its present dazzling success. If he escapes the vengeance of the many powerful enemies he has made for himself and is given time to consolidate his position, the way to supreme power lies open to him.[28]

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27. Interview with Hadid and Ibrahim; the latter ultimately left the group because of its involvement in the coup.

28. Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs: 4.11.1936, FO 371/20014/E7147.

3. The Unworkable Alliance between the Army and Jama'at al-Ahali

Within a few days of the coup, Hikmat Sulaiman's cabinet had settled down in office and the Prime Minister began to make good some of his promises. The government released prisoners - Yazidis, tribesmen, and a few political prisoners, mainly Communists[1], and in general there was an air of freedom for political activities. It permitted all the newspapers which had been suppressed by the previous government to reappear[2]. A royal irada was issued on 31 November 1936, dissolving Parliament, and elections were announced for 20 February 1937[3].

Meanwhile, Sulaiman's government endeavoured to establish itself to the outside world as a legitimate constitutional government, especially in the Arab world, since it was accused of being hostile to Arabism by most Syrian, Lebanese and Egyption newspapers[4]. The government waged a counter-campaign against these allegations, inviting Arab journalists to visit Iraq in order to persuade them to write favourable articles and books about

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1. Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs, FO 371/ 20014/E7137 and 31.10.1936 and E 7145 of 2.11.1936; see also Khairi, S.,(1974),p.68.

2. Ibid., p.69.

3. Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs: FO371/ 21856/E794, Annual Report for 1937; see also al-Hasani (1974),Vol.IV, pp.242-245.

4. Husain Jamil, who was appointed Director of Information, collected and kept a number of articles on the coup.

the new government[5]. The fact that it was the first government either in Iraq or the Arab world to gain power through a coup d'état, may have contributed to making it anxious to gain acceptance and to smooth apprehensions both inside and outside Iraq. Thus:

> It seems that the present government is doing everything it can to allay the fears of all factions and to appease them in every way possible and thus secure their support.

This also explained the appeals for friendship conveyed personally to the British Ambassador and the numerous gestures of alliance and friendship for Britain transmitted through C.J. Edmonds, Advisor to the Ministry of the Interior by the Prime Minister. Hikmat's attempts seemed to bear fruit:

> He (Hikmat Sulaiman) is very popular everywhere, and the British Ambassador has been definitely won over to him, for he told me so himself. He intends to give Hikmat Sulaiman his full support...[6]

These actions would have been routine for any Iraqi cabinet, and would have ensured it at least a normal period of survival[7] but Hikmat's cabinet was mainly composed of Jama'at al-Ahali, who were determined to

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5. Interview with Jamil, who denies that the new government distributed money to Arab journalists to gain their favours. However, 'Abd al-Razzaq al-Hasani has a copy of a cheque from the Iraq Government to the journalist Yusuf Yazbuk for ID 500. Furthermore, at least two books and a number of articles which were loud in their praise of the new government appeared shortly afterwards. See Yazbuk, al-Muharrirun (The Liberators), Beirut 1936 and Abu al-Nasr, 'Umar, al-'Iraq al-Jadid (The new Iraq), Beirut 1937.

6. Knabenshue to State Department: 12.11.1936, USNA.890G.00/387 and 4.2.1937, USNA 890G.00/399.

7. The average length of an Iraqi cabinet between 1921 and 1936 was 8.7 months. There were 22 cabinets in the period from October 1920 to October 1936.

carry out their ambitious programme of reforms, and not "merely interested in becoming ministers or deputies"[8]. At the same time, the fact that they did not come to power on their own, having arrived by means of guns, tanks and aeroplanes did of course complicate the situation. To make matters more difficult, the armed forces were under the command of Bakr Sidqi, who had already shown himself an ambitious and ruthless general. Hadid says of him:

> Personally, as a man, he was not trustworthy; he could do anything that came to his mind.[9]

This alliance, although a new one, might have had some slim chance of success, had Jama'at al-Ahali and other sympathetic political forces been more firmly entrenched and established. However, in the absence of a well-balanced system and because of its own inexperience and lack of organisation, Jama'at al-Ahali was too weak to stand firm in the face of a powerful and ambitious military leadership, or to challenge Bakr Sidqi's dictatorial advances, thus giving support to Be'eri's notion of "the natural course"[10], and also underlining the truth of the analogy of Sir Lancelot Oliphant at the Foreign Office:

> There is a great deal in the position and outlook of the new Iraqi Prime Minister which resembles the case of Sayid Zia ed-Din who

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8. Interview with Hadid.

9. Ibid.

10. Be'eri, Army Officers in Arab Politics and Society, London 1970, p.3-4. The theory accepts that military coup and subsequent domination of power as the "natural course" in contemporary Arab history.

> became Prime Minister of Persia when Reza Khan ousted the Shah of Persia. In the long run the Sayid had to disappear and leave Reza Khan as Dictator and subsequent Shah. Absit omen.[11]

From the beginning there were apprehensions and expectations on the future of the alliance, and thus on the future of the government.

The U.S. Minister, Knabenshue, wrote a report to his government after a discussion with the British Ambassador, which assessed the future outlook.

1. "The civil authorities (the prime minister and his cabinet) may prevail over the military authorities and eliminate the influence of the latter in the administration of the government.
2. Military authorities may possibly dominate the situation and exercise military control over the administration of the country through the civil authorities.
3. The military authorities may possibly completely overthrow the civil government and administer the country by a direct military dictatorship.
4. It is not entirely beyond the bounds of possibility that Bakir Sidqi conceived the idea of attempting to emulate Shah Pehlevi by dethroning King Ghazi and finally taking the throne himself."[12]

Hikmat himself accepted the anomalies of his position, but stood his ground at the British Embassy:

> There was no one who regretted these circumstances more than himself, or who appreciated more than he did the dangers inherent in the part played by the army, but he could promise me that his first preoccupation would be to put the army back into proper place. He would not remain a day in office if he failed to do this.[13]

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11. Ambassador (Baghdad) To S/S Foreign Affairs: 25.11.1936, FO 371/20014/E7371.

12. Knabenshue to State Department:12.11.1936,USNA 890G.00/387.

13. Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs: 2.11.1936, FO 371/20014/E7145.

In the early days of the coup, Bakr Sidqi seemed to shy away from politics and concentrated on strengthening the Army, which led Knabenshue to believe that his role might after all be purely military:

> It is my understanding that General Bakir Sidqi, now Chief of Staff, contrary to general expectations, is not trying to dominate the civil authorities and that he is devoting himself exclusively to army affairs.

and a month later:

> The fear which was at first experienced by almost everyone, that General Bakir Sidqi would exercise a military dictatorship, has now been largely dispelled. He is devoting himself strictly and entirely to the reorganization and strengthening of the army, of which he is now Chief of Staff.[14]

On the other hand both the British Embassy and the Foreign Office remained rightly suspicious of Sidqi:

> Whatever General Bakir Sidqi's ultimate aims - and his career since 1933 suggests that he will in the long run try to secure dictatorial powers - there is now likely to be an interim period, during which the General will endeavour to consolidate his hold on the Iraqi government, while Hikmat Sulaiman will endeavour to make good his assertion that he is in control of events and mot merely a puppet at the disposal of the Iraqi army. It seems probable that the "allies" of October 29th will shortly enter into acute competition, a state of affairs which will be complicated by the intrigues of Yasin Pasha and his friends and possibly by the independent ambitions of King Ghazi.[15]

As the year 1936 came to a close and the government began to initiate policies and to take important decisions

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14. Knabenshue to State Department: 12.11.1936, USNA 890.G.00/387 and 24.12.1936, USNA 890.G.00/395.

15. Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs: 4.11.1936, FO.371/20014/E7147.

a rift appeared between Jama'at al-Ahali on the one hand, supported by various progressive elements, and Bakr Sidqi and his gang of officers on the other, supported by conservative elements (including landowners, tribal shaikhs and merchants) as well as the Pan-Arab faction in the army and the Arab nationalists of al-Muthanna Club. The two camps virtually declared war, and used every available means to discredit each other. The conservative forces were generally stronger and more solidly based, and succeeded in winning Bakr Sidqi to their side. Meanwhile, the Pan-Arab army officers were plotting his assassination as his reliance on Kurds within the officer corps became increasingly evident[16]. At the beginning, Hikmat was the focus of the Reformists' hopes, but when they tried to pressure him to take their side, which was the weaker one, he fell under the complete influence of the domineering personality of Bakr Sidqi, virtually abandoning his colleagues in the process[17]. The British

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16. Batatu (1978), p.305; .After the assassination, the U.S. Legation reported: "As a Kurd he had, it seems, favoured Kurdish officers and this aroused the resentment of the Arab officers, many of whom were already very bitter about the assassination of General Ja'far who had been very popular in the Army. The most flagrant act of favouritism toward the Kurds on the part of General Bakir Sidqi was in the appointment of the latest class of cadets to the Military College, 70 per cent of which are said to have been given to Kurds. It seems that this was the final move of the General which aroused a group of Arab officers to form the plot resulting in his death. Knabenshue to State Department: 19.8.1937, USNA 890G.00/426.

17. al-Chadirchi (1970), p.43.

Embassy's Report for 1937 (written early in 1938) explains Hikmat's dilemma:

> At the beginning of the year Hikmat Sulaiman still retained much of the popularity which he had enjoyed when he became Prime Minister after the military revolt of the preceding October. He was beginning to realise, however, that the task of governing the country was harder than he had imagined, and though he had shown skill in keeping his colleagues together, it was already clear that their differences were likely to widen as the time passed. He was, moreover, under the irksome necessity of placating the Chief of General Staff who became more and more pressing in his demands and more impatient of civilian control as the months passed by.[18]

This conflict was further accentuated by a change of tactics on the part of Bakr Sidqi, who now began to interfere in the running of the government, both directly and indirectly, through the Prime Minister and the Minister of Defence, or often simply by executing his own decisions by means of acts of force and violence. This put the Prime Minister in the unenviable position of having to keep the two camps together.

Before the coup and after joining the secret society, Hikmat could well have been accused of having deceived Jama'at al-Ahali, not only because of his essentially superficial belief in their ideology, but also because he never finally severed relations with Yasin al-Hashim

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18. Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs: Annual Report for 1937, FO 371/21856/E794.

and Rashid 'Ali[19]. On the eve of the coup he attempted several times to meet C.J. Edmonds in order to prepare him for the coup and to square his position with the British Embassy[20]. After the coup he kept Jama'at al-Ahali in the dark about his close co-operation with the Embassy and his desire to include Nuri al-Sa'id in his cabinet. Such dealings were generally characteristics of Hikmat's behaviour as Prime Minister and confirmed 'Abd al-Fattah Ibrahim's forebodings. They accord with General Rowan Robinson's description of Hikmat as being "despite favourable appearances, ... essentially shifty and weak in character"[21] which may also explain Hikmat's abandoning Jama'at al-Ahali and his gradually falling under the dominance of Bakr Sidqi and his faction, although his intention was clearly to remain in control of the situation himself.

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19. "Yasin then surprised me by saying that he was in touch with Hikmat and had warned him of the dangers of allowing people like Kamil Chadirchi to have a real say in affairs. Hikmat should proceed on more practical lines than those forshadowed in his programme to Abu Timman and Kamil Chadirchi or he would be making the greatest mistake of his life." Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs: 9.12.1936, FO.371/20015/E7917.

20. Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs: 17.11.1936, FO.371/20015/E7625.

21. Minutes by J.G. Ward, 4.11.1936, FO.371/20014/E7147.

> The Prime Minister's worst troubles with his own colleagues were due to Bakr Sidqi. Although not a member of the Cabinet, Bakr Sidqi was the man who had put Hikmat and the other Ministers into power, and his influence was therefore strong, while his views were determined and often at variance with those of the Ministers. Hikmat hoped at first that he would be able to keep Bakr quiet and amicable if he could only give him all the guns, tanks, aeroplanes and other materials which he was demanding for the army ...[22]

For his part, sensing the weak position of the 'Reformists' as Jama'at al-Ahali became known, Sidqi exerted more influence and attempted to dominate the situation:

> It is persistently alleged that he attends all cabinet meetings and is in fact the dictator. I have reason to believe that this at least is partially correct. I also believe that if a change of government should take place, Bakir Sidqi will continue to dominate the situation.[23]

This was clearly felt by members of Jama'at al-Ahali, who were frustrated in attempting to curtail Army interference as well as in their efforts to carry out their reforms. Sidqi's interference in the work of the government culminated in the establishment of a "Supreme Defence Council", which was designed to "legalize his own role in the running of the government".[24] To this

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22. Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs: Annual Report for 1937: FO.371/21856/E794.

23. Knabenshue to State Department: 4.2.1937, USNA 890G.00/399.

24. Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs: 1938, FO.371/20795/E.

Kamil al-Chadirchi responded by tendering his resignation, which was not accepted[25]. This move brought the 'reformist ministers' opposition to Bakr Sidqi's dictatorial practices into the open. Thus, fairly early on, Jama'at al-Ahali came to the bitterly disappointing realisation that they were not thinking on the same wave length as Sidqi, especially when they were confronted with Sidqi's plans to do away with Yasin, Rashid 'Ali and Nuri, after the shocking murder of Ja'far al-'Askari, which they opposed strongly. Later they were to face great difficulties in dealing with the General and the unruly Army officers whom he used both to eliminate his foes and his companions in debauchery[26].

Both Jama'at al-Ahali's constant demands for reform and their progressive and democratic ideas did not at all please Bakr Sidqi. Both in their official capacity and through the Popular Reform League the Reformist ministers and the deputies kept on voicing the need for the reform of the administration and the legal system. al-Ahali newspaper became a further source of irritation

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25. "... a certain amount of friction was rumoured to have developed in cabinet meetings due to the presence of the Chief of General Staff". Knabenshue to State Department: 18.3.1937, USNA 890G.00/402.

26. Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs: Annual Report for 1937, FO.371/21856/E794.

for Sidqi; he had no sympathy for its constant barrage of demands and criticism, and was particularly annoyed by the articles of Yusuf Matti and 'Abd al-Qadir Isma'il, who, incidentally, was voicing the same issues in the Chamber of Deputies along with Hadid, 'Aziz Sharif, and Sadiq Kammuna. Finally, al-Ahali refused to acquiesce in Sidqi's attempts to exercise complete control over the government, and their concerted efforts to curb the intrusion of himself and his clique into governmental and political affairs angered him and clouded his relationship with them, especially Kamil al-Chadirchi. As a result he denounced Communism and insinuated that al-Ahali were cast in a similar mould. He then turned against them directly by accepting overtures from the anti-Reformist factions, whose main objective was to foil al-Ahali's determination to carry out their programme.

The political assassinations early in 1937 demonstrated Bakr Sidqi's single-mindedness not only in dealing with political adversaries but in taking politically dangerous decisions. They also pointed to the coming battle between a military dictatorship and a liberal party. The division became deeper and wider as time wore on, until the military dominated the political scene altogether, pushing the Reformists into the background. Eventually, the only way left for Jama'at al-Ahali to preserve their personal integrity and political prestige was to submit their resignation collectively and with as big a bang as possible. Thus the Reformist Ministers, along with Salih Jabr, submitted their resignation on 19 June 1937,

in protest at the government's use of force against a tribal rising in Rumaitha. This resignation, especially that of Ja'far Abu al-Timman, deprived Hikmat Sulaiman's government of popular support, leaving it weak and void of a strong base just like previous cabinets. This eventually encouraged the other political factions to make a move against it, a process hastened by the Pan-Arab officers' decision to close ranks and plot against Sidqi. His assassination in August deprived Hikmat of his only real source of power.

Thus a significant period in the political life of Jama'at al-Ahali and of the country came to an end. It is instructive, if somehow paradoxical, to compare the performance of Hikmat Sulaiman's own government, its shortcomings and its failure to carry out its ambitious programme with part of an article by Hikmat himself in Sawt al-Ahali on 12 August 1936. This article, entitled: The Cabinet and its Principles, in which he criticised the government of Yasin al-Hashimi, also illustrates the predicament of the Iraqi political system in general:

> The foregoing discussion clearly indicates the failure of the al-Hashimi cabinet to rule the country in accordance with the interest of the majority of the people. Fifteen years have passed during which several cabinets have come and gone without any sensible difference being felt by the people. That has occurred in an era when nations are making rapid progress, especially those which are still backward in their development. We feel that it is time to put an end to these antics and to start sincere and loyal work to strengthen the country and to improve the condition of the people.

Chapter VII

Political and Economic Developments 1941-1946

1. The Political Situation

As has already been described in Chapter III, Jama'at al-Ahali played only a minor part in politics between 1937 and 1941, a period which was characterised by a number of military coups and the domination of the Pan-Arab faction in the Army, headed by the officers of the Golden Square. The fall of Rashid 'Ali's government in 1941, and the reoccupation of the country by British forces, ushered in a new era in Iraqi politics, when Iraq became strongly affected by the new international constellation of power brought about by the Second World War.

After only a month of fighting (2-30 May 1941) between the Iraq Army and the British forces from India and Palestine, the invaders won a decisive victory. The British closed in on the capital, and the Iraqi forces disintegrated in the face of the advancing troops[1]. News

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1. For more details on the 1941 May uprising, see Haddad, U., Harakat Rashid Ali al-Gailani, 1941 (Rashid 'Ali al-Gailani's Movement) Sidon, 1950; al-Durra, M., al-Harb al Iraqiya-al-Baritaniya (The Iraqi-British War), Beirut 1969; al-Hasani, A., al-Asrar al-Khafiya Fi Harakat 1941 al-Taharruriya (The Hidden Secrets of the Liberation Movement of 1941), Sidon 1964; Yaghi, I., Harakat Rashid 'Ali al-Gailani (Rashid 'Ali al-Gailani's Movement), Beirut 1974; al-Sabbagh, S., Fursan al-'Uruba fi al-'Iraq (The Arab Knights in Iraq), Damascus 1956.

of this collapse caused chaos in the capital, and the government was forced to flee before the arrival of the British force:

> On the 29th May, Rashid 'Ali, his colleagues, the Golden Square and some few of their most prominent supporters, fled from Baghdad and crossed into Iran. The Germans and Italians had previously gone north to Mosul, whence they retired to Syria when the movement collapsed. Yunus Sab'awi, left behind in Baghdad as military governor to organize the final resistance, found it prudent, after a few hours of office, to follow the others to Tehran. On the 30th May a temporary "Committee of Internal Security" sued for an armistice. Fighting ceased on 31st May.[2]

On 1 June, the Regent returned to Baghdad; the opposition had been defeated, the Army humiliated and in disarray, while he was supported by an occupation army and an energetic British Ambassador, with well defined objectives. The Regent and most politicians who supported him clearly owed their position directly to Britain, and more immediately to the British Ambassador, Sir Kinahan Cornwallis. His tactics and persistence had been instrumental in calling for the troops to topple Rashid 'Ali. Hence the Regent and his circle were eager, if not obliged, to co-operate fully with the British authorities.

The objectives of the British government in Iraq, as specified by the British Ambassador in his report, were:

> (a) To secure full facilities for our war requirements and unimpeded opportunities for training and defensive measures by our Navy, Army and Royal Air Force.

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2. Sir K. Cornwallis to S/S Foreign Affairs: 8.3.1942 (1941 Review of Events),FO.371/31371/E2596.

> (b) To root out pro-Nazis and bring about a change in public feeling, both to facilitate (a) and, looking ahead, to consolidate our future position by making people realise the advantage of alliance with us.
>
> (c) Unofficially and in the hope of helping to create greater stability, to influence the administration as far as possible, but not to the extent of causing a crisis and so jeopardising (a) and (b). Owing to my personal knowledge of the working of the governmental machine and my old friendship with Ministers, shaikhs and others, I happened to be favourably placed for this.[3]

At least one lesson the British learned from the revolt of Rashid 'Ali al-Gailani was that there was a considerable degree of resentment over the fact of their presence and policy in Iraq and the Middle East. It was also imperative that they should impress on the Iraqi government the necessity of following more liberal policies and of attempting to create a more responsive and less corrupt administration. Thus:

> The Rashid 'Ali uprising in May 1941, during the course of which not only the Iraqi army but the majority of the population of Iraq demonstrated dislike for the British, came as a great shock to Britishers in Iraq and stimulated the British Government into modernizing its control apparatus in this area.[4]

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3. Sir K. Cornwallis to S/S Foreign Affairs: 30.3.1945, (Review of Events 1941-1943),FO.371/45302/E2431.

4. Henderson to State Department: 13.3.1944, USNA 890G.00/695.

Thus the Regent, in league with the British, set out to achieve a new set of objectives. The first step was to choose an acceptable Prime Minister who would also be willing to carry out British war aims, both political and economic. Nuri al-Sa'id was ruled out, on the recommendation of the British government, and eventually Jamil al-Madfa'i was induced to form the new government[5]. al-Madfa'i's Cabinet was ready to co-operate with Britain's war efforts and demands without reservation, especially in external affairs. The British Ambassador wrote:

> The new administration fell in readily enough with the desiderata of His Majesty's Government, agreeing to the stationing of British troops anywhere in Iraq for the duration of the war, to the establishment of a censorship, to British military participation in the control of Basra and to the expulsion of the Italian Legation.[6]

Thus al-Madfa'i set a precedent which was followed by successive cabinets, which turned Iraq into a base for the British war effort, as well as a line of defence and a channel for supplies. Thus:

> For the remainder of the war, under the premiership of Jamil al-Madfa'i (1941), Nuri al-Sa'id (1941-44) and the veteran nationalist Hamdi al-Pachaci (1944-46), Iraq co-operated fully with her British ally. She became a base for the military

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5. Muhmud Subhi al-Daftari, 'Ali Jawdat and Jamil al-Madfa'i were approached by the Regent to form the government,but declined, the former two suggesting al-Madfa'i, upon whom the Regent insisted. al-Kasani (1974),Vol.VI,p.6.

6. Sir K. Cornwallis to S/S Foreign Affairs:8.3.1942, FO.371/31371/E2596.

> of the Levant and Persia, a channel of supply to Russia and until the Axis pincers were withdrawn, a defensive position against a possible attack through the Western Desert or the Caucasus.[7]

However, al-Madfa'i was reluctant to meet British demands in full. In his internal policies in particular he refused to take tough measures to suppress pro-Axis elements in government agencies, the Army and among the population at large, which led Cornwallis to have him replaced:

> al-Madfa'i's cabinet acted as though the events of May had been comparable to any of the other coups d'état by which one government had succeeded another since the death of King Faisal I - one more lamentable episode over which it was charitable to draw a decent veil. Officials flagged when Ministers themselves intercede on behalf of the worse offenders; inevitably, too, anti-British propaganda grew in volume and in force. Jamil al-Madfa'i's supineness had allowed (Nazi intrigue and propaganda) to gather volume in the summer (particularly in the towns).[8]

Furthermore al-Madfa'i resisted British efforts to interfere openly in Iraqi internal affairs, but realised that he would eventually have to bow to pressures from the Embassy and the Palace. Thus he tendered his resignation

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7. Longrigg,S.H., and Stoakes,F.,Iraq, London 1958, p.102.

8. Sir K. Cornwallis to S/S Foreign Affairs: 8.3.1942, FO.371/31371/E2596.

in September 1941. At first Ibrahim Kemal was seen as a possible replacement, but opposition from Nuri prevented Kemal from forming a government. Eventually Nuri was himself recalled from Cairo, where he had served as Iraqi representative, and appointed Prime Minister on 9th October. An Embassy despatch notes:

> The Prime Minister, before his appointment, promised me full co-operation and announced determination to pursue a vigorous policy.[9]

In fact, Nuri had submitted to the British Ambassador a memorandum of his promised policy, as the U.S. Minister in Baghdad reported to the Secretary of State:

> British Ambassador last night allowed me to read memorandum of Nuri's promised policy, the various points being replies to Ambassador's direct questions.
> One. Nuri promises fully implement Anglo-Iraq Treaty, particularly in respect of British defense measures and communications.
> Two. He will purge Iraq Army of pro-Axis elements and strengthen it for maintenance internal order with maximum 25,000 and minimum of 15,000 mostly recruited with minimum of conscripts, leaving out tribal elements (this will gain him popularity with tribes).
> Three. He would prosecute strong action against Rashid Ali Gailani and his more responsible followers (failure to take such action was cause of fall of Midfai Cabinet).
> Four. He will dismiss all pro-Axis Government officials and intern in concentration camp all potentially dangerous persons.
> Five. He will bring about reforms in Ministry of Education, dismissing pro-Axis teachers and replacing inflammatory text books (it was anti-British propaganda disseminated by students which was most effective and damaging).

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9. Ibid.

> Six. He will bring about reforms in organisation and administration of other Ministries, particularly Interior, under guidance of British adviser of that Ministry.
> Seven. He will take steps to close Vichy-French and Japanese Legations (Nuri told me he intends to prepare public opinion for this by public statement thanking countries which had been friendly to Regent and legal Iraq Government such as Britain, America, Turkey, Egypt, etc., and condemned those which had been pro-Axis such as France and Japan).
> Eight. He promises not to raise Palestine or Pan-Arab questions during the war (this is very important for it is agitation in this respect which developed anti-British feeling and furnished best ammunition for German propaganda which culminated in May hostilities).
> With British troops in Iraq, Nuri has a unique opportunity to bring about necessary reforms without fear of a coup d'état. However, there are elements in his programme which might easily lead to dissension in the Cabinet and which might draw attempt at his assassination of which he seems fully aware.[10]

Nuri proceeded to honour his commitments to the Embassy, and as a result remained in power for the rest of the War, much to the satisfaction of his masters:

> In the implementation of the Anglo-Iraqi Alliance it must be recorded that the present Administration have been exemplary.[11]

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10. Knabenshue to State Department: 15.10.1941, USNA 890G.00/601. This report reveals several important aspects of Nuri's political style. In connection with point eight, it is worth noting that Nuri was always at pains to declare his support for Pan-Arab nationalism, and consistently stressed his intention of working for the "liberation of Palestine".

11. Sir K. Cornwallis to S/S Foreign Affairs: 8.3.1942, FO.371/31371/E2596.

On the other front, internal affairs and the weeding out of anti-British elements, his government's performance was satisfactory too, as the British Embassy reported on different occasions[12]. Nuri also turned to the Army, proceeding to dismantle it for all practical purposes. He dismissed and imprisoned a large number of officers and suspended the application of conscription in an attempt to gain popularity with the tribes[13]. The campaign to

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12. e.g. "Nuri Sa'id's government has continued to suppress activities prejudicial to the Anglo-Iraqi Alliance and the effect of their action has, on the whole, been satisfactory.Thirty to forty more troublesome men have been interned in Fao, where there are now some 170 inmates". Sir K. Cornwallis to S/S Foreign Affairs: 14.12.1941, FO.371/31371/E258; also: "A considerable number of the more virulently anti-British officials and others were consigned to the concentration camp at Fao". Sir K. Cornwallis to S/S Foreign Affairs: 8.3.1942, FO.371/31371/E2596. Nevertheless, constant vigilance was necessary: "Meanwhile, our security authorities had been engaged in preparing a list of the most dangerous characters still at liberty. On the 22nd May I presented this list, containing seventy-five names, to the Minister of the Interior and urged the internment of the men in question. Immediate results were not forthcoming, but I maintained constant pressure". Sir K. Cornwallis to S/S Foreign Affairs: 21.2.1943, FO.371/35010/E1667.

13. Sir K. Cornwallis to S/S Foreign Affairs: 14.12.1941, FO.371/31371/E258.

purge the army of undesirable officers was taken personally by Nuri himself[14], who also brought back British military advisers and reinserted them into command positions in the army infra-structure[15]. Furthermore, there were strong calls, supposedly initiated or at least backed by the British to dismantle the army altogether[16]. Such measures had the effect of seriously weakening the armed forces, and breaking their fighting spirit. This was clearly demonstrated in the campaign against Mulla Mustafa in Barzan in 1943:

> The army was sent to cope with the rebel tribesmen of Mulla Mustafa, a task which proved completely beyond their capacity. The truth is that the Iraqi army, the reorganization of which continues to hang fire, has never recovered from the sad events of 1941. Its morale is shot to pieces, all too many of its officers are lazy, arrogant and inefficient, and it is unpopular in the country.[17]

However, the government enlarged and strengthened the police force, raising numbers from 12,266 in 1941 to 21,730 in 1947[18], with the further recruitment of

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14. Sir K. Cornwallis to S/S Foreign Affairs: 8.3.1942, FO.371/31371/E2596.

15. al-Durra (1969), pp.420-421; Interview with Nur al-Din Mahmud (former Chief of General Staff and premier of a military government, 19th November 1952). Quoted, Humaidi (1976), p.107.

16. "The Minister of Justice, for one, considers the army to be still completely unreliable and is reported to have advised the Regent that it should be disbanded and replaced by a gendarmerie force under the Ministry of the Interior." Ambassador (Baghdad), to S/S Foreign Affairs: 21.12.1943, FO.371/35010/E1667.

17. Ibid.

18. A letter from Mahmud al-Durra to al-Hasani; see al-Hasani (1974), Vol.VI, p.198.

5,000 secret policemen. In August 1944, during al-Pachachi's government, General Renton, the Inspector-General of the Iraqi Army, was given the task of reorganising and reforming the Army. He submitted a report recommending the winding up of two full divisions which would have left the Army with only two divisions, one combat-ready division and the other for training purposes. This reduction would have automatically put 400 officers out of jobs and into retirement. The Defence Minister, Tahsin 'Ali, resigned in protest against the plan, which was supported strongly by Salih Jabr, Mustafa and Arshad al-'Umari, and backed by the Regent[19]. Cornwallis' report on the political situation during 1944 confirmed Tahsin Ali's fears, and in the event, three divisions were retained[20].

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19. A letter from Tahsin 'Ali (the Minister of Defence at the time) to al-Hasani. See al-Hasani (1974) Vol.VI, pp.224-227.

20. Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs: 9.1.1945, FO.371/45302/E608, and Humaidi (1976), p.142.

2. British control during the war years

British political and economic interests in Iraq were sufficient to lead to a second British occupation in 1941. However, the hostilities of May 1941 served to underline the widespread opposition to Britain and the Iraqi politicians who supported British policy.

The new British Ambassador, Sir Kinahan Cornwallis, who had first hand knowledge of Iraq, was determined to capitalise on the defeat of Rashid 'Ali's government and the presence of British forces inside the country to re-establish British authority and influence in Iraq and the Middle East, while at the same time securing the war-time objectives of the Allies in consolidating their defences against Axis advances. British objectives have already been specified[1], but a further series of problems confronted Iraq during Nuri al-Sa'id's period in office as Prime Minister. These were the difficult economic situation, the unrest in Kurdistan[2] and various political activities which created popular opposition to government policies. Opposition generally centred around the presence of British troops and bases in Iraq[3] but more general resentment was directed at economic conditions and the problem of supplies.

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1. Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs: 16.4.1945, FO.371/45302/E2431.

2. Sir K. Cornwallis to S/S Foreign Affairs: 12.1.1944, FO.371/40041/E345. See also Appendix F.

3. Humaidi (1976) p.165. It is reported that the government foiled an assassination attempts on the life of premier Nuri al-Sa'id. See Ibid., pp.117-118.

In order for the British to achieve their objectives they had to operate on two different levels. In the first place, they had to control the Iraq government, the Regent and the politicians. Secondly, they attempted to influence the Iraqi population by means of propaganda, gestures of friendship, gifts of money and favours, while at the same time clamping down on and imprisoning anti-British and pro-Axis elements. Such efforts required a large and diversified organization:

> Since 1941 the British Embassy under the Ambassador, Sir Kinahan Cornwallis, has strengthened its staff and greatly enlarged the scope of its activities. The number of British advisers in the framework of the Iraqi Government has been increased, and within the organization of the British armed forces occupying the country have been established agencies charged with observing developments within the country and promoting feelings of friendliness between the Iraqis and the occupying British forces.
> The British Embassy also has observers called Political Advisers in cities and towns of importance in the country. These observers not only keep the Embassy fully informed regarding political developments in the area but also assist in maintaining friendly relations with prominent Iraqis in their vicinity.
> Agencies of the British Government and British commercial concerns at times retain the support of Sheikhs and political or religious leaders by payments of money for services rendered. ...
> A British adviser or employee is to be found in practically every key position in Iraqi political, economic and cultural life, with the exception of posts of an ecclesiastical nature. It is practically impossible for this legation to have any dealings with the Iraqi Government which do not eventually come under the scrutiny of some British subject connected with that Government. British subjects are to be found in high positions in the Iraqi army, in Iraqi courts, in the Iraqi educational system, in Iraqi finance institutions, in Iraqi

> agricultural organizations, etc. They also control Iraqi ports and transport systems, including water, rail, automotive and air. They assist in supervising the collection of taxes and the sale of land, and they influence the determination of import and export policies.[4]

In a report summarising his period of office, Cornwallis discussed the various agencies and their nature and purpose, notably Freya Stark's Ikhwan al-Hurriyah and the British Council:

> tribute must be paid to the work of the British military mission, of British advisers and many other of the Iraqi Government officials and of the area liaison officers under the orders of Combined Intelligence Centre, Iraq. Nor must mention be omitted of the British army, which, by its traditional straight dealing and good behaviour, has done a great deal to heal old wounds.[5]

The task of controlling the administration proved too difficult and delicate, and at times frustrating. As has already been explained, Iraq had a weak and corrupt political system with warring political cliques. After the crushing of Rashid 'Ali and the Arab nationalists who were generally anti-British, one strong faction was eliminated, which was basically opposed to Nuri al-Sa'id and the British presence in Iraq,thus leaving no serious opposition. But the inherent weaknesses within the system remained and even gained strength from

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4. Henderson to State Department: 13.3.1944, USNA 890G.00/695.

5. Sir K. Cornwallis to S/S Foreign Affairs: 30.3.1945, FO.371/45302/E2431.

the disappearance of the opposition, especially that of the Pan-Arab Golden Square. Thus, the corruption inherent in the system, as well as the government's indifference and insensitivity to popular feelings, became more apparent than ever before:

> Many officials, among them three Cabinet Ministers, with whom this Centre (C.I.C.I.) has personal contact, have expressed the opinion that were it not for the presence of Allied Forces in the country acting as a deterrent, disturbances due to economic distress would by now have broken out. The person held largely to blame for this unsatisfactory state of affairs is the Prime Minister who is deemed to have neglected, with indifference, the interests of the masses and, in consequence, to have brought home, perhaps more forcibly than ever before, the realisation that the country is governed by an oligarchy of racketeers.[6]

In his reports to London, Cornwallis severely criticised the Iraqi politicians with whom he worked. His purpose seems to have been to lay the responsibility for the maladministration and corruption on the ineptitude of the Iraqi politicians. In fact, he reported that although he was devoting time and energy to monitoring and manipulating the government, the problem lay with the quality of the politicians:

> The ... recurrent Cabinet crises illustrated the inability of Iraqi public men to put their country, even in the hour of danger, before personal animosities, private gain, family ties or sectarian interests. They showed up, too, the lamentable dearth of able, honest administrators considered eligible for Cabinet rank.[7]

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6. Wilson, (Baghdad) to State Department, 14.1.1943, USNA 890G.00/653.

7. Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs: 21.2.1943, FO.371/35010/E1667.

In another report at the end of his stay in Iraq, the Ambassador explains Iraq's, and perhaps his own, dilemma:

> The real trouble lies not with us, but with the rulers themselves, who obstinately refuse to give up any of their privileges or prerogatives to others. There are now signs that they are becoming apprehensive for their future, and I and my staff continually do the best we can to stimulate their apprehensions, a violent clash between the "haves" and the "have-nots" is inevitable in time.[8]

This type of leadership was a burden both to Iraq and to the British Embassy although for very different reasons and with different effects. Britain's main preoccupation was the maintenance and control of a friendly government, but the quality of the existing politicians clearly made the task difficult if not impossible. The British Ambassador was put in the unenviable position of assembling politicians to form a Cabinet that would be sufficiently responsible to run the country without provoking incidents which might end in a return to direct British rule. Furthermore, Cornwallis had to preside over almost daily conflicts within influential groupings and warring factions:

> Yesterday the Counsellor of the British Embassy, who in the formation of the new Cabinet played a certain role behind the scenes under the direction of the British Ambassador, stated to a member of the Legation his view that although the new

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8. Sir K. Cornwallis to S/S Foreign Affairs: 30.3.1945, FO.371/45302/E2431.

> Cabinet is weak and makeshift, it is the best that can be done short of the British taking over complete control of the country. Certain signs of concern are perceptible in high Embassy circles over this situation. The British naturally wish to avoid assuming complete adminstration of Iraq, under the principles for which the Allied Nations are fighting, but are fully aware of the inherent weakness of Iraqi politicians, even in the best of Cabinets. It cannot be over-emphasized that Iraqi politicians are so loath to impose unpopular measures - and the measures to control hoarding of supplies, for which there now exists such a crying need, are bound to be extremely distasteful to the Iraqi public - that the typical politician would by far prefer to throw in his hand rather than risk his political career. The British are thus compelled to play a very delicate game, endeavouring on the one hand to induce the Government to impose those strict economic measures necessary to control hoarding and limit soaring prices, while not going so far as to upset the Iraqi applecart and having to assume administration of the country's affairs.[9]

In 1943, Iraq finally declared war on the Axis Powers, and signed the United Nations Pact at Washington, D.C.[10] where it had opened a Legation a few days later.In October the Parliament's term came to end, the first Iraqi chamber to do so, and elections were to be held in the same month. Nuri al-Sa'id and Salih Jabr co-operated in preparing a list acceptable to all concerned, but the Regent unexpectedly submitted his own list of candidates and insisted on having all of them elected to the Chamber of Deputies[11]. His

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9. Wilson (Baghdad) to State Department: 22.10.1942, USNA 890G.00/635.

10. Sir K. Cornwallis to S/S Foreign Affairs: 8.2.1944, FO.371/40041/E1143.

11. Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs: 27.9.1943, FO.371/35012/E5768.

list included at least five candidates who were at odds with Salih Jabr[12] and others to whom Nuri al-Sa'id and Salih Jabr raised objections and threatened to resign. A compromise was reached through Nuri al-Sa'id's "patience and loyalty"[13], and the Cabinet accepted 99 out of 105 candidates from the Regent's list.[14] Although Nuri remained in office, three ministers, including Salih Jabr resigned.

One of the first acts of the new Parliament was the passing of the "Law amending the Organic Law"[15]. The new law strengthened the power of the Monarch and consequently that of the Regent. However, according to the American Embassy, the British Government did not achieve the objective which it had sought from the amendment of the Organic Law, which would supposedly give more power to the Regent:

> The Regent is proving to be something of a disappointment, however, in this respect. He is permitting personal likes or dislikes to influence him in the selection of cabinet members.[16]

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12. Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs: 29.9.1934, FO.371/35012/E5838.

13. Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs: 6.10.1943, FO.371/35012/E5985.

14. Sir K. Cornwallis to S/S Foreign Affairs: 8.2.1944, FO.371/40041/E1143.

15. Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs: 25.10.1943, FO.371/35012/E6513. For more details on the preparations of the amendments to the Organic Law, see Khadduri (1960),pp.206-222.

16. Henderson to State Department: 3.11.1944,USNA 890G.00/11-344.

Nevertheless, the British forced the Regent and Nuri al-Sa'id into a working relationship, withdrawing Nuri from public life when the sensitivity of the Regent became too high. Hence the British Embassy played a major role in selecting, balancing, and reconciling the politicians, as well as shaping and implementing the policies of successive governments. The Ambassador kept a keen eye on the Regent, giving him instructions on the running of the government, the selection of ministers and high government officials, and on all major decisions. While the Ambassador encouraged the Regent to take an active part in politics and attempted to boost his morale[17], the Regent in his turn sought the Ambassador's advice on internal and external matters[18]. The British Embassy worked best with Nuri al-Sa'id, whether he was inside or outside the Cabinet. Nuri always consulted and confided in the British Embassy, and more important, he submitted to their judgement and listened to their advice:

> On the 3rd October, Nuri al-Sa'id tendered his resignation, and was at once invited to form a new cabinet. He had decided (after considerable consultation with this embassy, in the course of which we had consistently emphasised the necessity for a strong personality at the Ministry of Finance) that Salih Jabr must be retained and that 'Ali Mumtaz would in consequence have to go.

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17. Sir K. Cornwallis to S/S Foreign Affairs: 8.2.1944, FO.371/40041/E1143.

18. Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs: 18.12.1943, FO.371/35013/E7953; 30.12.1943, FO.371/35013/E8147; and 22.1.1943, FO.371/35010/E946.

> Thus Taufiq Suwaidi declared that Nuri Pasha was retaining Salih Jabr only because the British had told him to do so.[19]

Although Nuri seemed the best man to serve the British in Iraq "since there was nobody equally good to take his place"[20], his deviousness and corrupt style occasioned constant protests and calls for his removal. His autocratic rule was widely resented, as was his general indifference to pressing social problems:

> There is no doubt that successive Governments in Iraq have been corrupt; that many members of those Governments have been more interested in enriching themselves and their friends than in looking after the interests of the Iraqi population in general; that they have displayed a reprehensible lack of interest in improving sanitation, in enlarging educational facilities, and in protecting the workers and peasants from exploitation.[21]

Thus the British, although they appreciated Nuri's services to themselves, had reservations about his services to his own country:

> The British Ambassador's point is, broadly put, that although Nuri may not have been an ideally efficient and intelligent leader of his country, he has certainly served the British well and deserves their continued support; this point is a good one, and is reported to have the support of the British military authorities, who have no desire to be forced to use valuable British troops to maintain order in Iraq.[22]

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19. Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs: 14.10.1942, FO.371/31371/E6356.

20. Minutes by an employee at the Foreign Office,17.5.1943, FO.371/35010/E2884.

21. Henderson to State Department:30.11.1944, USNA 890G.00/11-3044.

22. Wilson to State Department:14.1.1943,USNA 890G.00/653.

The British Embassy's report on the formation of Nuri al-Sa'id's seventh Cabinet was minuted as follows:

> Total: 5 Sunni Arabs, 3 Shiahs, 2 Kurds,
> 1 nondescript
> or: 1 Nuri, 3 crooks, 3 bumblers,
> 4 (we hope) honest men.[23]

This prompted a most revealing remark by another official:

> It is a real pity they can't start training some young men, or this regime can't last indefinitely at this rate, and we are being identified to some extent with support of a reactionary regime.[24]

It seems that by mid-1943, the British Embassy in Baghdad and the Foreign Office in London had grown tired of Nuri's tactics, and were becoming impatient with the lack of change and reform. Through their network of intelligence agents the British had become aware of the general discontent, and the widespread criticism of Nuri's government, and had also become aware of the popularity of the most active political group, the Democratic Front which consisted of the regrouped Jama'at al-Ahali, other progressive and independent elements, and the reactivated Communist Party. A U.S. Legation despatch describes the popular reception of a Communist Party leaflet which put forward demands for the alleviation of economic distress:

> From such information as is available to the legation it would appear that the reception of the leaflet by the population is in general somewhat favourable. The failure of the

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23. Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs:27.12.1943, FO.371/35013/E8069.

24. Ibid., Minutes by an employee at the Foreign Office.

> Government to provide articles of consumption, particularly clothing, for the masses of the people has caused keen resentment and many persons are gratified that the distributors of the leaflet have dared to put into writing what many of them have been afraid to say themselves.[25]

These were the reasons behind the British Government's apprehensions for the future of Iraq in general and Nuri al-Sa'id and his "old gang" in particular. The Ambassador found it necessary to put more pressure on the Regent, the Prime Minister and other government officials[26]. He informed his government that he had had a meeting with the Regent in the course of which he recommended "that he (the Regent) should set his political house in order without more delay ...

> You will appreciate that proposed changes represent little more than the usual reshuffling of old political cards of which many people are becoming increasingly tired. I therefore felt justified in recommending the Prime Minister to introduce some new and younger blood if he could and instanced appointing a Kurd pending the withdrawal of the Minister of Justice as providing opportunity.[27]

The displeasure of the British Embassy with Nuri al-Sa'id's cabinet grew louder and the hopelessness of their position became more apparent:

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25. Henderson to State Department: 30.11.1944,USNA 890G.00/11-3044.

26. Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs:22.1.1943, FO.371/35010/E946.

27. Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs:7.6.1943, FO.371/35010/E3313.

> Although the new Cabinet undoubtedly included men of ability, it contained no progressive elements and was representative of the old ruling class of established families.
> All observers of the Iraqi political scene are agreed that there is a crying need for new blood in the councils of State. The difficulty, however, is to find it.
> There is undoubtedly growing weariness of the "old gang" which one day is likely to find violent expression in some form or another.[28]

This report may well have been advance warning of the decision to relieve Nuri al-Sa'id of his duties and to replace him with a new face. Conditions were arranged for Nuri's exit, his ill health, disagreement with the Regent and, finally, an insulting attack on his government in the Chamber of Deputies. He resigned on the 4th June 1944[29].

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28. Sir K. Cornwallis to S/S Foreign Affairs: 8.2.1944, FO.371/40041/E1143.

29. Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs: 23.5.1944, FO.371/40041/E3170; 17.5.1943, FO.371/35010/E2884; 8.6.1943, FO.371/40042/E3640.

3. Economic Conditions during the War Years

The effects of the war were perhaps most acutely felt in the form of economic difficulties, with soaring prices and shortages of essential commodities. This resulted in general discontent and widespread suffering, and gave common cause for opposition political parties, which now demanded better and more responsive government. More significantly, it demonstrated the inability of the governmental machinery to solve a vital and basic issue which concerned the whole population. It also pointed out the corruption and degeneration of politicians and government officials.

Economic difficulties began to be felt immediately after the arrival of British forces in Iraq in the summer of 1941, since they had to be supplied locally. This coincided with a year of bad harvests, dwindling imports, and increased shipping and supply difficulties[1].

British forces were instrumental in increasing the amount of currency in circulation by 50% to over ten million dinars, which expanded even further because of growing military expenditure[2]. This was

> accompanied by wholesale profiteering, speculation and hoarding. Despite growing popular outcry, the Administration appeared incapable of coping with the

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1. U.S. Legation (Baghdad) to State Department: 5.1.1942, USNA 890G.00/610.

2. Ibid.

> situation. Anti-hoarding legislation of a mild character was indeed promulgated, but little use appears to have been made of it.[3]

The strains were, naturally enough, felt most by the poor who constituted the overwhelming majority of the Iraqi population, for while their income remained constant, the prices of basic and essential commodities (bread, sugar, tea and rice) at least tripled and some increased more than tenfold[4].

The British Embassy report for 1942 also emphasised the critical economic situation:

> During 1942 it (the economic situation) outweighed in importance all other problems, though this was only intermittently realised by the Iraqi Government themselves. Our military disbursements grew from month to month and, in the absence of any measures for absorbing surplus purchasing power, the currency circulation increased from I.D. 11 million to almost I.D. 22 million in the year. Simultaneously imports into Iraq were further curtailed, with the result that prices continued to mount at an accelerating rate - not only those of commodities in short supply, but even more markedly of land and local products. Hoarding and speculation proceeded unabated, thus forcing prices far higher than purely legitimate demand could have done, and causing a phenomenal increase in the cost of living. For the lower classes this was certainly doubled during the year.[5]

This report fails to emphasise the effect of the economic

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3. Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs: 8.3.1942, FO.371/31371/E2596.

4. Humaidi (1976),pp.127-129.

5. Sir K. Cornwallis to S/S Foreign Affairs: 21.12.1943, FO.371/35010/E1667.

situation on the population of Iraq or to show the very real hardships most people were experiencing. There were demonstrations in Baghdad led by women and children and railway workers went on strike, protesting against price inflation which made it impossible for them to feed their families[6]. The government rationed sugar, established government bakeries and fixed prices for six essential commodities[7]. Sawt al-Ahali and the Communist Party led a campaign calling on the government to take realistic and energetic measures to relieve the wretched conditions of the poorer sections of the population. They demanded government control of all essential commodities and just distribution at fair prices. They urged the government to impose severe punitive measures against profiteers, hoarders and speculators as well as against corrupt government officials who were in cahoots with them[8].

The British Ambassador encouraged the Iraqis to take some "interesting steps" to absorb surplus purchasing power:

> The government came also to realise that something must be done to deal with the fundamental problem of draining off the surplus purchasing power in the hands of the public ...
> Apart from official action - or rather

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6. Humaidi (1976), p.131.
7. U.S. Legation (Baghdad) to State Department: 5.1.1942, USNA 890G.00/610.
8. Sawt al-Ahali, for the period of the War 1942-1945.

> inaction - some progress was made with encouraging the purchase by Iraqi investors of securities on the London Stock Exchange, while arrangements were also put in hand for the supply of diamonds to the local market through the U.K.C.C.[9]

In 1943 the same economic ills still prevailed and the problem of supplies continued. The government finally enacted a Law for the Regulation of Economic Life[10] and appointed Colonel Bayliss as director of imports with extraordinary powers, in the vain hope of controlling an increasingly critical situation. The economic situation, as reported in the British Embassy's 1943 Review, proved to be a source of continuous concern for the British government:

> Iraq is caught between the devil of major British military and other war expenditure in the country and the deep sea of drastically curtailed imports. As a result, not only has the currency in circulation expanded from 6 million dinars in 1941 to 34 million dinars at the end of 1943, but the general cost of living has risen most drastically. The consequence has been a form of inflation which, as it began to develop seriously in 1942, not unnaturally caused grave concern in Cairo and London, especially as it was accompanied by the evils of speculation, profiteering, corruption and hoarding.[11]

The British needed to buy wheat and barley from Iraq in order to send it to India, Persia and Turkey, which

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9. Sir K. Cornwallis to S/S Foreign Affairs: 21.2.1943, FO.371/35010/E1667. Furthermore, Salih Jabr complained in the Senate that the UKCC was charging ID 5 or 6 per ounce of gold, while the official price was 29/- or ID 1.45. Sawt al-Ahali (20.9.43, 26.2.44) also criticised the way in which the gold was marketed in Iraq.

10. Sir K. Cornwallis to S/S Foreign Affairs: 8.2.1944, FO.371/40041/E1143.

11. Ibid.

further complicated the situation. Earlier, the British had sent wheat to ease the famine in India and in 1943 the British Ambassador was pressing the Prime Minister and Finance Minister to provide barley desperately needed in Persia and Turkey[12].

In 1944 and 1945, despite good harvests, the same difficult economic situation continued, basically because its root causes remained unchanged, in spite of the fact that Nuri al-Sa'id had created a Ministry of Supply in March 1944[13] specifically to deal with the economic situation. The British Embassy Review of 1944 noted:

> The economic consequences of war have made themselves painfully felt. The country as a political unit has enjoyed continued prosperity, thanks to the maintenance, though on a reduced scale, of British war expenditure and to an adequate harvest. But the general population's condition of life has been further depressed by restricted imports and rising prices. The measures taken to combat these tendencies proved in the main ineffective, and the dismissal of Colonel Bayliss, the Director General of Imports, was followed by a period of economic decontrol.[14]

In 1945, the same difficulties prevailed:

> There is little change to report in the economic situation in general. The country continues to suffer from an inordinately high price level and a striking shortage

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12. Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs: 28.3.1943, FO.371/35010/E2239.

13. al-Hasani (1974),Vol.VI, pp.194-195.

14. Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs: 9.1.1945, FO.371/45302/E608.

> in consumer goods. Cotton textiles have, however, been arriving in reasonable quantities and distribution has now taken place in most areas. Good and abundant harvest.[15]

During the war years, Britain accumulated large debts to Iraq, as a result of goods and services provided by Iraq for the British war effort, which the British Embassy considered the main benefit of the Anglo-Iraqi Alliance. The Iraqi politicians were counting on using the debt (£100 million) to develop "some of their grandiose plans for the development of Iraq's natural resources and for the development of a modern local industry"[16]. However, these plans were not to be realised as the British government subsequently claimed that it was unable to repay its debts. The U.S. Minister, Mr. L.W. Henderson, reported the problem and its possible repercussions to the Secretary of State:

> One of the most serious problems which face both Great Britain and Iraq is that arising from the fact that during the course of the war Great Britain has incurred a current indebtedness to Iraq in the value of approximately two hundred million dollars. British officials state in confidence that, in their opinion, it will be impossible for an extended period after the war for Great Britain to make any headway in liquidating this indebtedness by payment in currency, gold or goods.
> Iraqi officials have told me in confidence that they also are deeply worried at what the reaction will be in Iraq when the public learns that much of the wealth which it

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15. Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs: 19.3.1945, FO.371/45302/E2177.

16. Henderson to State Department: 20,9.1944,USNA 890G.50/9-2044.

> believes that Iraq has accrued during the war is in the form of frozen credits extended involuntarily to Great Britain. Only a handful of Iraqi officials realize that this purchasing power exists in an unusable form in Great Britain and that it may consequently be impossible for Iraq to realize during this generation. The situation has been guarded so carefully that it has not been mentioned in the press.[17]

In fact this did not remain a secret for long. On 2 February 1945, Sawt al-Ahali published an editorial on the Anglo-Egyptian War Debt Agreement and asked the government whether it had any plans to make use of the Iraqi sterling debt, which amounted to an estimated £60 million[18]. The following day, the paper urged that a similar agreement should be made with Britain, and insisted that the agreement should specify the repayment of the debt in hard currency, preferably dollars, because Iraq would need to import various essential items for its post-war reconstruction from the U.S.A.[19]. Soon afterwards, in June 1945, Britain and Iraq signed the "Hard Currency Agreement" which specified that Iraq would hand Britain all the hard currency it received, mainly from oil royalties and in return Britain would secure the amount of £14 million for Iraq imports. This in essence further tied Iraq to the sterling area and ensured that Iraq's debts would be paid back in small instalments over an unspecified period[20].

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17. Ibid.

18. Sawt al-Ahali, 2.4.45.

19. Ibid., 3.4.1945.

20. Ibid., 6.6.45; see also Agwani, M.S., The U.S.A. and the Arab World 1945-1952, Aligarh, 1958, p.90.

On 7.6.1945 Sawt al-Ahali wrote an editorial strongly criticising the agreement, showing its disadvantages for Iraq. The total amount of hard currency which Britain was to give to Iraq, in reality, did not exceed £3 millions, because Iraq would first hand back some £11 million which had been accumulated annually from oil revenues and other resources, and Britain would supply the £14 millions in return. Also, the fact that Britain took the sole responsibility of supplying Iraq with imports would put the country even more under British economic control. A further disadvantage was that the bulk of the debt would be repaid in depreciated sterling[21].

The American and British governments concluded an agreement on these debts in March 1946, under which the U.S. government was to help Britain pay. Sawt al-Ahali demanded that the previous agreement should be changed because it was damaging to Iraqi interests. The paper also demanded that Iraq should not give up any part of what she was owed by Britain since she was in far greater need than Britain[22]. However, as expected, the agreement was renewed on the same terms as the previous year[23]. Muhammad Hadid wrote criticizing the :

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21. Sawt al-Ahali, 7.6.45.

22. Ibid., 21.3.46.

23. Ibid., 22.4.46.

renewal of the agreement and pointing out the damage done to Iraqi interests for Britain's benefit[24]. However, Sawt al-Ahali now became more involved with the newly licensed National Democratic Party and the matter was lost in the bustle of local political activity. Hence Iraq probably lost a substantial part of Britain's borrowings, which might well have contributed to the improvement of the country's under-developed economy. An analysis some years later shed more light on the subject:

> the most important factor which has limited Iraq's freedom in directing her savings in accordance with her economic interest is her link with the sterling area. As a result of this link, Britain had a free hand during the last war to buy from Iraq without limitation or condition, while Iraq's freedom of purchase even from the countries of the sterling area were restricted. In consequence Iraq's sterling balances accumulated. These balances were in fact forced savings, the monetary value of which was a result of a fixed exchange rate between the dinar and sterling (had the exchange rate between the dinar and sterling not been fixed the latter would have depreciated in relation to the former) lower than their real value. Furthermore, when Britain failed in an attempt to abolish these balances, she set out to restrict expenditure from them in a manner that reduced their usefulness. Iraq was not allowed to buy from hard currency markets unless the goods were not available in the countries of the sterling area and were very essential; the determination of which goods can be termed essential was subject to some extent to the control of British authorities, with the result that a large part of these sterling balances was spent in buying consumption goods, many of which were of the "luxury" class, from British markets.[25]

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24. Ibid., 29.4.46.

25. Oboosy, M.J. "A Study in the Theory of Economic Under-development with Special Reference to Iraq", The Middle East Economic Papers, Economic Research Institute (Beirut 1954), pp.143-44, Quoted Agwani (1958), p.90.

4. The Post-War Political Situation

The Second World War produced new international, regional and local configurations which impinged simultaneously and collectively on the political climate in Iraq, forcing the regime and the British to change their policies and tactics and to concede a number of relatively liberal measures. Although Britain was still formidable in victory, she came out of the war battered and exhausted, while the United States, and, in spite of its terrible losses, the Soviet Union, emerged stronger and more ambitious. Even during the war years the Soviet Union could not be ignored and its progressive ideology and heroic resistance to the Germans made headlines in the Iraqi newspapers, especially Sawt al-Ahali, which impressed the Iraqis with their love of larger than life stories. The Communist party and other progresssive and democratic elements capitalized on the Soviet Army and people's performance in the war as proof of the soundness of their ideology[1].

American Involvement in the Middle East

In the course of the Second World War, the United States became directly involved in the Middle East for the first time, especially after joining Britain in the foundation of the Middle East Supply Centre in Cairo in

1. See Sawt al-Ahali, for the war period, Chapter XI.

1941. The purpose of the Centre was to assist the army in eliminating bottlenecks, to meet wartime demands, and to

> rationalize all supplies for the Middle East and to ensure that with the utmost economy in shipping space the people of the Middle East should receive vital requirements.[2]

American participation in the agency after 1942 assured the success of its supply activities, because most imported commodities now came from the United States. A Combined Anglo-American Agency for Middle East Supplies was set up in Washington to process all MESC requisitions, but in spite of this collaboration, the MESC remained primarily a British instrument[3]. The MESC dealt with the Middle East countries as an integrated economic area in an attempt to feed the population and the Allied forces, in the hope of minimizing imports from outside the region.

After the fall of Rashid 'Ali in 1941, the Arab countries became more subject than ever before to British political and economic control:

> To say that the Arab Near East - so long in the British sphere of influence, and in political matters still tied to Britain more effectively than any other foreign power - is part of the United Kingdom's economic empire would not be as much of an overstatement as might seem at first. Both the export and import trade of the region are chiefly with Britain. As part of the sterling area, the Near East

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2. Speiser, E.A. The U.S.A. and the Near East, (Harvard 1950), p.115.

3. Hurewitz, J.C., The Middle East Dilemma (New York 1973), pp.221-2.

> accumulated in London the quivalent of some two billion dollars in sterling securities. What happens to this huge stake, how is it to be liquidated, will be determined in London and not in Cairo or Baghdad.[4]

This particularly explains why Anglo-American relations in the Middle East and in the MESC were at best "not marked by complete harmony" and often "led to friction"[5]. It became apparent that the United States had become deeply enmeshed in Middle Eastern affairs between 1942 and 1945 [6], and generally resented Britain's virtual monopoly of trade in the area[7]. Hence American officials and businessmen demanded the removal of trade restrictions imposed by Great Britain on some Middle Eastern countries, and suggested making an increased amount of dollars available to the Arab countries so as to enable them to trade with the United States[8]. These demands were matched with an outburst of activity by major American corporations (particularly the oil companies in Sa'udi Arabia) in the lucrative Middle Eastern markets, since the War had eliminated German, Italian, and Japanese imports and left a vacuum that could now be filled by American goods and products, oil companies, and financial institutions[9].

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4. Speiser (1950), p.134.

5. Campbell, J.C. The Defense of the Middle East (New York 1960), pp.31-32.

6. Ibid., p.226.

7. Agwani,M.S.(1958), pp.30-31.

8. Ibid., p.88. Quoting the Baltimore Sun 16.2.1945.

9. Ibid., pp.89-90.

Nevertheless, the restrictions set up by Britain made it difficult if not impossible for non-British commercial interests to enter these markets, and British employees working for the Iraq government also proved unco-operative[10], However, conditions began to change drastically at the end of the War as the United States emerged stronger than ever. Furthermore influential groups in the Middle East, particularly politicians and businessmen, began to look to the United States to play a bigger role in the area, encouraged by persistent American demands for the relaxation of British control. As an active partner during the last years of the war, the United States felt that it should have a share of the spoils, play a more active role, and gain a foothold in the Middle East:

> I am also inclined to believe that although we do not desire the disappearance of British influence in the Middle East, we nevertheless feel that the time has come for us to play the role of a more active partner in the development of this part of the world.
> We would be able effectively once and for all to break through the British monopoly in this part of the world, which, although sugar-coated during the war period, has nevertheless been effective in assigning to the United States and its representatives the role of interested but rather passive spectators.[11]

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10. Henderson to State Department: 13.3.1944, USNA 890G. 00/695.

11. Henderson to State Department: 20.9.1944, USNA 890G. 50/9-2044.

On several occasions the British Ambassador had informed his government of the increasing interest in the area on the part of the United States and the Soviet Union, and although the two powers seem to be mentioned together, it is obvious that the British Embassy distinguished clearly between different spheres of influence, always guarding against the spread of Communism in Iraq, while attempting at the same time to block U.S. economic and governmental intrusion[12]. However, Hamdi al-Pachachi's government encouraged American political and economic interests in Iraq, and sought to give the U.S.A. similar privileges to those enjoyed by the British. In 1944, Arshad al-'Umari told the American Ambassador that he hoped that,

> during the post-war era the relations between Iraq and the United States will be as close, or as nearly close as conditions render possible, as those between Iraq and Great Britain. ...
> It is evident from the remarks made by the Minister that the Government of Iraq is anxious that the United States will in the future display an active interest in this area and that it will not take the attitude that it is merely a territory in the sphere of influence of another Great Power.[13]

Cornwallis was also aware of the changes:

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12. Henderson to State Department: 20.4.1944, USNA 890G.24/147, also 12.1.1943, USNA 890G.6363/378.

13. Henderson to State Department: 25.11.1944, USNA 890G.00/11-2544.

> The Iraqis are, at the moment, in the pleasant position of being wooed by the Americans, and it is probable that in the near future they will be made much of by the Russians as soon as the Soviet Minister takes up his abode in Bagdad. They feel nowadays that they have a definite position in the international scheme and that they are no longer dependent on us as they were in the past. They keep careful watch on how we act towards their neighbours, and they are quick to notice and resent any more favourable treatment that we may give to others.
> In these circumstances, it obviously behoves us to take nothing for granted. We must be zealous in preserving the predominant political position which we have gained and in so acting we must realize that the Iraqis have grown up and must be treated as adults. We must take advantage of the undoubted opportunities which exist for British business enterprise, bearing always in mind that other nations are in keen competition. ...[14]

> If Iraq were not important to us, it might pay us to get out, but it is, in fact, extremely important. In addition to its strategic position, its oil and its communications, we have a third reason. We cannot afford to neglect Iraq in view of the interest which Russia and the United States are now taking in the Middle East. We no longer hold the field alone.[15]

With this outside competition and the advent of the Labour government to power in 1945, Britain now had to reconsider its position and to exert pressure on the rulers of Iraq to modernise their methods and establish more liberal and democratic policies. Furthermore, conditions inside Iraq also created strong pressures for

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14. Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs: 9.1.1945, FO.371/45302/E608.

15. Sir K. Cornwallis to S/S Foreign Affairs: 30.3.1945, FO.371/44302/E2431.

change and reform. In particular, the more politicised and educated elements had grown more and more resentful of the power of the old oligarchs as well as becoming restless and impatient with the inability of the system to carry out much needed political and economic reforms.

The economic hardships which the majority of the population had suffered, and the apparent inability of the government to relieve the situation, were undisputed proofs of the unrepresentative and corrupt political system and gave further momentum to opposition demands for reforms and change in the government. Even the British Embassy had to re-evaluate the situation:

> The high cost of living, irregularities in distribution of bread and flour, and the hardship which these things entail for the poor, have been taken up as themes for propaganda by the Iraqi Communists. It is clear that left wing elements in this country are gaining strength both in numbers and influence and that they are profiting from the immunities which they have so far enjoyed as anti-Nazis to develop propaganda to an extent which has not hitherto been permitted. There is now a well-established and popular left wing daily newspaper (Sawt al-Ahali) which makes a feature of news and articles favourable to Russia, a monthly magazine mostly filled with articles on the achievements of the Soviet Government, and an illicit and somewhat irregularly published periodical which is the organ of the extreme group. Cyclostyled handbills are distributed from time to time in the big cities, and Communist favours, ties and badges are sometimes worn by the more youthful and enthusiastic supporters of the movement. All this is very disagreeable to the rather reactionary politicians who govern Iraq, and I do not think it will be long before they resort to some form of repressive action.[16]

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16. Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs: 22.1.1943, FO.371/35010/E946.

As a result, Britain felt it necessary to demand the infusion of new blood and a move away from old tactics and practices. Certain steps had to be taken in order to facilitate movement in that direction. First, and probably most obviously, Nuri al-Sa'id had to be sacrificed. The Regent was to be encouraged to take a more active role in internal politics, and a more neutral and acceptable individual would be asked to form a cabinet which would follow a more liberal line and give relative freedom of the press and political activity. According to plan, Nuri resigned, claiming lack of support from the Regent and Hamdi al-Pachachi headed what came to be called the "Regent's Cabinet"[17]. The new government took measures to ease the tense situation, release built-up pressures and absorb widespread ill-feelings toward the ruling class. The government gave permission for applications to form trade unionswhich quickly showed "a fairly discreet activity"[18]. The first and largest union to be formed was the Railway Workers Union, which soon after its formation called for a strike demanding wage increases[19]. There was also a resurgence of other political activities in the form of political parties, trade unions, and student demonstrations. Different groupings were formed from a number of sections

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17. Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs: 9.1.1945, FO.371/45302/E608.

18. Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs: 19.3.1945, FO.371/45302/E2177.

19. Humaidi (1976), p.153.

of society, notably peasants, women and students[20].

The government partially lifted censorship, and also allowed more newspapers to be printed, thus creating,

> a notable resurgence of political activity and discussion. This tendency was exemplified in the press. At the beginning of the year, five Arabic daily newspapers were published in Bagdad. There are now eleven. Part of the press is of course engaged in supporting the Government. The Opposition, whether in the press or out of it, is, thanks to a gradual lifting of the censorship, throwing off the restraint of the last three years. In many cases the old xenophobia and irresponsible nationalism are apparent just below the surface especially in attacks upon the "imperialism" of other powers. But the general tone of the opposition has not by any means unconstructive. In the sphere of internal politics it has demanded an effective tackling of the supply problem, the purging of public life, decentralisation and the formation of political parties. "Communism" has undoubtedly increased during the year, and "Communist" leaflets have been distributed on a wide scale. But these terms in Iraq imply no more than an academic and impracticable sense of frustration with things as they are.[21]

al-Pachachi's government succeeding in easing the tense political situation which prevailed during Nuri's time and moved towards establishing a more normal administration. The period was also marked by more vigorous and dynamic activity on the part of the nationalist and democratic

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20. Ibid., p.160.

21. Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs: 9.1.1945, FO.371/45302/E608.

groupings which had lost all faith in promises of democracy and reform. Instead, these turned to stronger and more direct opposition to the government and the British presence. Monitoring the political flurry, and sensing the inability of the government to face up to it, the Regent became so discouraged that he confessed to the British Ambassador his determination to resign. The Ambassador in his turn conveyed this to his government, after dissuading the Regent from the idea and asserting H.M.G's confidence in the Regent and the system, although the latter was not convinced:

> He (the Regent) remarked gloomily that he expected the King would be dethroned in due course "with all these Communists about".[22]

As the war came to an end, the situation became increasingly critical. The government could either go back to repression and coercive measures or move forwards by granting the right to form political parties. Political groupings had crystallized during and after the war into different factions. Three of them were led by well-known politicians who had been prominent members of Jama'at al-Ahali and, for reasons largely connected with personality, split and formed their own groups, Sawt al-Ahali led by Kamil al-Chadirchi, al-Rabita led by 'Abd al-Fattah Ibrahim, and al-Watan, or al-Sha'b, led by 'Aziz Sharif. All these

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22. Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs: 4.3.1945, FO.371/45329/E1531.

were at odds both with each other and with the Communist Party, which had itself survived a number of factional splits and emerged from the war stronger and more active under the leadership of Fahad. The former supporters of the May 1941 rising, members of the now defunct Nadi al-Muthanna who had been prominent in the Pan-Arab movement, were gradually released from internment. All these groups demanded independence, the removal of British troops from Iraq and the abrogation of the 1930 Treaty[23]. Through their newspapers, whether legal or underground, these groups also demanded the implementation of democratic liberties and the abolition of wartime emergency measures and censorship, and the legalisation of political parties.

On 27 January 1945, the Regent called for a joint session of both houses of parliament, and delivered a speech[24] which came as a surprise to the cabinet, as well as the politicians[25], in which he declared that the government intended to implement a number of social reforms. He emphasised the need for the establishment of political parties and the enactment of a new electoral law. After the Regent's speech, criticism was levelled at al-Pachachi's government which it was clear he wanted

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23. Humaidi (1976), p.165.

24. al-Hasani (1974),Vol.VI, p.244.

25. Interview with Muhammad Fakhri al;Jamil who alleges that the British Embassy constructed the Regent's speech. See also Humaidi (1976),p.167.

to replace[26]. al-Hasani indicates that the Regent wanted Salih Jabr to form the Cabinet, which tends to confirm the suggestion that Britain had been grooming Jabr for the job since 1941[27]. Jabr, however, was indisposed and after a month Tawfiq al-Suwaidi formed the government, accepting the premiership on the condition that he would be given a free hand to select his ministers[28].

The cabinet was formed on 23 February 1946, and according to Kamil al-Chadirchi, "was a signal for a new era in Iraq"[29]. One of the reasons was that the cabinet included men of "high quality and good patriotic reputation", such as Sa'd Salih, 'Abd al-Hadi al-Dhahir and 'Abd al-Wahhab Mahmud[30]. The new government promised to restore peace-time conditions by abolishing emergency

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26. For the full text of the speech, see al-Hasani (1974), Vol.VI, pp.244-249.

27. Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs: 14.10.1942, FO.371/31371/E6356; 7.6.1943, FO.371/35010/E3313, and Sir K. Cornwallis to S/S Foreign Affairs: 8.2.1944, FO.371/40041/E1143.

28. al-Suwaidi,T., Mudhakkarati, Nisf Qarn min Tarikh al-'Iraq wa al-Qadhiya al-'Arabiya (My Memoirs . half a century of Iraq's history and the Arab Cause) (Beirut 1969), pp.412-417; also interview with Muhammad Fakhri al-Jamil, al-Suwaidi's son-in-law.

29. al-Chadirchi (1970), p.85.

30. Ibid. Sa'd Salih, an ex-mutasarrif, was known for his honesty and courage. 'Abd al-Wahhab Mahmud and 'Abd al-Hadi al-Dhahir were both left-inclined lawyers: Mahmud had worked closely with Jama'at al-Ahali in the early 1930s.

rule , closing internment camps, lifting censorship, permitting the formation of political parties, enacting a new electoral law, and alleviating the plight of the poor, especially the fellahin, by distributing miri land to them. In fact al-Suwaidi's Government fulfilled many of its promises. It ended martial law, closed the camp at 'Amara, abolished censorship, allowed trade unions to be formed, changed the election law by abolishing secondary elections, and finally permitted political parties to function legally[31].

On 2 April 1946, the Ministry of the Interior sanctioned the formation of five political parties. It refused to give permission to only one, which was called Hizb al-Taharrur al-Watani (The National Liberation Party), because the government accused the founders of Communist leanings[32]. Although the Communist Party remained underground, many of its active members joined other established parties.

The five parties were (from Left to Right):

1. Hizb al-Sha'b (the people) headed by 'Aziz Sharif, with its party organ al-Watan.
2. Hizb al-Ittihad al-Watani (the National Union) headed by 'Abd al-Fattah Ibrahim, with its organ al-Ra'i al-'Am, later al-Siyasa, then Sawt al-Siyasa.

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31. Humaidi (1976), p.174.

32. Khairi, S. (1974), p.126.

3. al-Hizb al-Watani al-Dimuqrati (the National Democratic) headed by Kamil al-Chadirchi, with its organ Sawt al-Ahali.
4. Hizb al-Istiqlal (Independence) headed by Muhammad Mahdi Kubba with its organ al-Istiqlal, later Liwa' al-Istiqlal.
5. Hizb al-Ahrar (the Liberals) headed by Kamil al-Khudairi then by Tawfiq al-Suwaidi, and later by Sa'ad Salih, its organ Sawt al-Ahrar.

The British Ambassador commented:

> The first three are parties of the Left and the word "Communist" is inaccurately but almost universally applied to their members. The fourth is made up largely of persons who were active in support of Rashid 'Ali Gailani and many of its members are ex-internees. The last is led by a tribal Sheikh from the Middle Euphrates who has been a Deputy for some years and always resides in Bagdad. With the exception of Kamil Chederchi, the leader of the National Democrat Party, who was Minister of Economics and Communications in Hikmet Suliman's 1936 Ministry, none of the leaders of these parties have played more than minor roles in politics hitherto.
> It is an abuse of language to call these groups representative parties. Their programmes are vague and, in the case of the three Leftist parties, are almost indistinguishable, the lines of division being personal. Attempts have been made to unify the Left, but so far personalities have proved too strong. Every party has, as its main theme, the diminution of foreign influence in Iraq.[33]

A more perceptive evaluation of the three left parties was given by Mr. Busk in a despatch to the Foreign Office:

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33. Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs: 17.4.1946, FO.371/52401/E.3735.

> With the attitude of the Government is contrasted the programme of the three political parties of the left. The programmes of the three left parties are all based on Democratic Principles and contain only moderate economic reforms. They acknowledge private property and initiative and call only for the distribution of state lands without Nationalisation of existing estates. They advocate planning by the State for economic developments and all agree on calling for the evacuation of foreign forces from Iraq and the solution of the Palestine Problem by establishing an independent Arab State.[34]

Hizb al-Ahrar, the Liberal party, was supposed to act as a moderate pro-government political organisation and to balance the activities of the opposition parties. Soon afterwards the party disintegrated in the way of other parties with similar characteristics. Hizb al-Istiqlal attracted a wide following from lawyers and students of Pan-Arab aspirations and maintained itself as an ally of the National Democratic party in their opposition to the regime. Serious attempts were made to unify the three leftist political parties but this did not materialise because of the leaders' (al-Chadirchi, Ibrahim and Sharif) failure to reconcile their basic personal differences, though Kamil al-Chadirchi was emerging as the popular leader of the left, along with Muhammad Mahdi Kubba, the leader of the Independence Party.

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34. Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs: 19.9.1946, FO.371/52402/E9584.

The period which followed the formation of political parties witnessed a wide upsurge in political activities which dominated the life of the capital. Political parties and their newspapers, the headquarters of trade unions, meeting halls and clubs became alive with articles, lectures, speeches and mass meetings. The left parties made their presence felt so much so that after they had only been in existence for three months, the Regent went to London to ask the British "for help in repressing left wing elements in Iraq"[35], and in June 1946 he appointed the ruthless and hard-headed Arshad al-'Umari as Prime Minister[36], to deal with the widely growing influence of the left. The prime minister "went for his objective like a bull at a gate"[37], declaring the Hizb al-Sha'b and the Hizb al-Ittihad al-Watani illegal,

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35. Minutes by Mr. W. Baxter, Foreign Office: 19.7.1946, FO.371/52402/E9584.

36. Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs: 23.8.1946, FO.371/52402/E8328. The British Ambassador, Sir Hugh Stonehewer Bird, noted later:
"It (the 'Umari regime) had deviated into a reactionary dictatorship"; see Sir H. Stonehewer-Bird to S/S Foreign Affairs: 5.12.1946, FO.371/52405/E11846.

37. Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs: 23.8.1946, FO.371/52402/E8328.

suppressing the opposition newspapers[38] and finally sentencing Kamil al-Chadirchi to six months' hard labour[39].

Thus, the period in which the country enjoyed what could almost be described as normal political life, did not last more than three months. Nevertheless, it left a strong impact on Iraq, especially on the opposition and ruling hierarchy. The Regent and his politicians were struck by the magnitude of both the popularity and influence of the opposition parties which caused them to increase their suspicion of them. In fact, the period was crucial in making the ruling class more distant and creating an unbridgeable gap between the government and the governed. This helped the opposition movement to involve a wide

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38. Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs:
3.9.1946, FO.371/52402/E8794;
16.8.1946, FO.371/52402/E8328;
6.9.1946, FO.371/52402/E8921;
16.9.1946, FO.371/52402/E9318.

39. Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs:
16.8.1946, FO.371/52468/E8113;
20.8.1946, FO.371/52468/E8336;
22.8.1946, FO.371/52468/E8345;
28.8.1946, FO.371/52468/E8531.

spectrum of alienated and disaffected sections of society, even including the Armed Forces. This latter group was ultimately to prove instrumental in providing the final blow which crushed the monarchy on the morning of 14 July 1958.

PART III

PART III

The Role of Jama'at al-Ahali in Iraqi Political Life, 1932-1946

Introduction

This section will discuss Jama'at al-Ahali's political activities, its involvement in political life, and the four stages of its development as a political movement. It is concerned with three different but inter-related aspects of the group's development.

Chapter VIII describes the role and development of the group between 1932 and 1933 with special reference to al-Ahali newspaper; Chapter IX gives a chronological account of the group as a political movement between 1933 and 1935; Chapter X continues the story until 1942, concentrating particularly on the group's role in the coup of 1936 and in the government of Hikmat Sulaiman. Finally, Chapter XI studies the group's reappearance and the publication of Sawt al-Ahali between 1942 and 1946.

During this period Jama'at al-Ahali passed through four distinct stages; the first of these was the ideological stage, between 1932 and 1935. The second stage saw the group's active political involvement between 1935 and 1937, while the third stage, of low-profile political activities, lasted between 1937 and 1942. The fourth stage saw the resumption of political activities between 1942 and 1946, and culminated in the formation of three separate political parties headed by three former prominent members of Jama'at al-Ahali.

Chapter VIII

1. The Ideological Phase, 1932-1933

The three years between 1932 and 1935, which saw the appearance of Jama'at al-Ahali on the political horizon, the spread of its ideology al-Sha'biya and the publication of its influential newspaper al-Ahali and literature (Rasa'il al-Ahali), were also one of the most intense periods of the group's activities. During the early part of this phase, the four founders of the group did not view themselves as professional politicians or aspirants to political or government office. In fact, they did not wish to have anything to do with the system, nor with the traditional politicians whom they considered dishonest and opportunist. Jama'at al-Ahali initiated and supported a number of projects, such as the campaign to eradicate illiteracy, the boycott of the Baghdad Light and Power Company and the boycott of foreign goods in general in an attempt to protect local industries. They also called for the establishment of a national bank and the formation of enterprises by voluntary individual donations of one fils, called mashru' al-fils.

In their drive to gain acceptance and recognition and in their haste to achieve their goals, the founders of the group began to recruit prominent politicians, including Kamil al-Chadirchi, Ja'far Abu al-Timman, and Hikmat Sulaiman. With their support they formed a secret political

society on the basis of al-Sha'biya, a step which was to alter the group's ideology because of its involvement in practical politics. During these years al-Ahali gained strong support through its own hard work and its influential newspapers, and it gradually became a focal point of opposition to the regime and the political system. This emerges clearly from the regular and lengthy suppression of the various newspapers and the trials and imprisonment of members of the group.

The Beginning of the Group's Activities

When Jama'at al-Ahali was founded, its first priority was to publish a good quality and essentially non-commercial daily newspaper, which would reflect and disseminate its ideas. The paper gained the group its popularity and was instrumental in establishing it as a well-known political group and later enabled its members to expand into other activities. For this reason the bulk of Jama'at al-Ahali's concern during its first two years was devoted to the production of the newspaper. The four founders were collectively responsible for the production of al-Ahali, but since 'Abd al-Fattah Ibrahim and Muhammad Hadid had become government employees, the task of the day to day running of the paper fell on Husain Jamil and 'Abd al-Qadir Isma'il. Although they continued to pursue their private law practices they devoted most of their time to the paper, with Isma'il even living on the paper's premises for a time. In the early days 'Ali Haidar Sulaiman assisted in running the paper as well as contributing various articles. The only paid editors

on the paper were Yusuf Isma'il, 'Abd al-Qadir's brother, and Yusuf Matti, both of whom had connections with the Iraqi Communist party.

Three different groups of young men assisted in the production of the paper in different ways and also contributed material. The first consisted mainly of graduates or students of the Baghdad Law School who were friends and associates of Jamil and Isma'il[1]. The second consisted of graduates of the American University of Beirut who were friends of Ibrahim and Hadid[2]. A third group contributed political articles, short stories and poems, and translated stories and articles. They played an important secondary role, for they came from various progressive and Marxist groupings, finding al-Ahali more congenial to their way of thinking than any other existing paper or political group at the time[3].

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1. e.g. 'Aziz Sharif, Khalil Kanna, Jamil 'Abd al-Wahhab, Isma'il al-Ghanim, Qasim Hasan, Nadhim Hamid, & Sadiq Kammuna.

2. The most important member of this group was 'Ali Haidar Sulaiman, who could be considered one of al-Ahali's inner circle, and remained there until he left the group after the death of King Faisal (see Conflicts). Other AUB graduates were Ibrahim Baithun, Jamil Tuma, Nuri Rufa'il, and Hashim Jawad. Fadhil al-Jamali also contributed some articles on education.

3. This group consisted mainly of writers, like Mustafa 'Ali, 'Abdullah Jaddu', 'Abd al-Wahhab al-Amin, Lutfi Bakr Sidqi, Na'im Tuwwaiq, the poets Muhammad Mahdi al-Jawahiri, Ahmad al-Safi al-Najafi, and Muhammad Salih Bahr al-'Ulum.

2. Editorials, Articles and Interests of al-Ahali Newspaper, 1932-1933

As far as the outside world was concerned, Jama'at al-Ahali came into existence on 2 January 1932, when their paper first appeared. al-Ahali dealt with subjects of concern to the public in general and progressive members of the educated class in particular. Its role as a committed opposition and progressive newspaper was clear from the very beginning, not only from its editorial columns, but also in the topics and subjects which it covered. These topics will be analysed under four headings: local, that is, Iraqi affairs; regional affairs (the Arab countries), eastern affairs; (mainly Turkey, Iran and India), and international affairs (Europe, the United States and the Soviet Union). Almost every issue of al-Ahali attacked or questioned contemporary developments in Iraqi politics as well as in the regional, Eastern and international arenas, and most of the editorials contained criticisms of part or the whole of the system of government and of British policy. This was, of course, the main feature distinguishing al-Ahali from most other newspapers in Iraq such as al-Tariq, the Iraq Times, al-'Alam al-'Arabi, and al-'Ahd al-Jadid which tended to support the Iraqi and British governments, praising and complimenting their policies and generally supporting the system, or simply reporting the news without comment, occasionally raising objections to government policy.

Iraqi Affairs

al-Ahali newspaper dealt with every significant issue relating to conditions in Iraq, analysing each point, pointing out various problems and suggesting solutions. The paper concentrated on topics of particular contemporary importance, such as the incompetence, inefficiency and venality of the government and the political system, the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty, economic conditions and oil concessions, social conditions, and education.

In the second issue of al-Ahali on 3 January 1932, an editorial appeared entitled A fi al-Bilad Nahdha? (Is there a revival in the country?). After a discussion of the real meaning of "progress",the paper answered sarcastically that those in power who had managed to build big houses, drive cars and take trips abroad had certainly achieved "progress". However, the majority of the population were still struggling at the barest level of subsistence and could not be said to have "progressed" at all. Before even attempting to prescribe the cure for the ills of society, the mass of the population should be involved in an ideology devoted to the "progress" of every sector of society[4].

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4. al-Ahali, 3.1.1932.

In another editorial entitled "What is the meaning of dictatorship in colonized countries?", the article explained the system of people's dictatorship (Diktatoria al-Sha'b) as in Italy and the Soviet Union, comparing the systems of government in those countries with those of the "Rulers and Monarchs" who are under foreign domination and simultaneously attempting to establish a form of dictatorship. While the former governments aspire to serve their people, the latter ultimately only serve foreign powers. In a direct reference to King Faisal the article continued "What can we expect from a dictatorship established with the help of a foreign power against the will of the people? and what can we expect from a dictator ... who has been appointed by that foreign power to be ruler?". The article went on: "Peoples should rule themselves by themselves; they know their own aspirations best, and there is no one who can protect their rights better. No one should infringe on the rights of the people for their anger is great"[5].

Another strong editorial followed on 26 January, headed "Eleven years of the so called 'national government' ", which described the frequency and arbitrariness with

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5. Ibid., 24.1.1932. This article was in response to rumours that Faisal was attempting to set up a dictatorship.

which governments had been formed. It compared the progress which had been achieved in Turkey, which used to have problems similar to those of Iraq before Kemal Atatürk came to power and transformed the Turkish Republic into a modern state. Iraq on the other hand had had no real progress, and nothing had been achieved except talk about 'great projects', while the population continued to live in primitive conditions. As the article pointed out this was a direct result of the government's incompetence and inefficiency, since it "did not pay attention to fundamental issues but only busied itself with superficialities".[6] al-Ahali paid attention to the government's policy and performance, regularly criticising faulty practices and policies or the lack of them, and especially the absence of planning. It stressed the desirability of the public accountability of government, pointing out that the people are the supreme power in the land. An article entitled "What is our destination? Shall we keep going without direction and in the dark??" discussed the deterioration of each sector of the economy and the spread of vice and the general decline in morality in the country. It pointed out that the lack of planning and organization, which should have been the responsibility of the government, had resulted in bankruptcy in the agricultural sector, stagnation in industrialisation, and in an unproductive and defective educational system.

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6. Ibid., 26.1.1932.

The article concluded "It seems clear that the government does not possess well defined policies which could lead the country to prosperity ... so what is our destination?"[7].

The paper discissed historical and political issues in general, but in fact it was referring to the ruler of Iraq and the political system. This is clear from an editorial of 4.3.1932, entitled "Cheating the People", in which cheating is defined as taking place when "a few of the ruling class tries to keep the people misinformed". The article traces the history of kings and rulers who cheated their subjects by pretending that they were chosen by God as his shadow on earth, and thus had no responsibility towards their subjects. Such rulers, the paper asserted, are criminals, and their crime is so great that sooner or later the people will rebel against them, destroy their chains and make the people's will supreme[8].

al-Ahali did not confine its criticism to the executive branch of government, but also directed its attention towards the legislature and the judiciary. In an article on 20 May 1932, the editorial attacked the inefficiency and incompetence of the Chamber of Deputies and its inability to finish its work during its regular sessions. This necessitated an extension of the session and thus the waste of much needed public money on extra

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7. Ibid., 5.2.1932.

8. Ibid., 4..3.1932.

expenses for the deputies[9]. In discussing the different committees and commissions of enquiry which had been set up in recent years on economic conditions (Hilton Young), land problems (Dowson), and education (the Monroe Commission), the paper urged the government in June 1932 to go ahead with the various recommendations for reform since so much money had been spent on these studies[10].

Iraq's entry into the League of Nations, which supposedly signified the country's independence, was met with cynicism by al-Ahali, while the other newspapers hailed it as a major step in the history of Iraq (e.g. The Iraq Times 23.10.1932). This and the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1930 and relations between the two countries were the subject of constant discussion in al-Ahali. On 31.1.1932, an editorial headed "The case of Iraq's entry to the League of Nations ... the spirit of the Mandate still exists", denounced the hollowness of the country's much discussed 'independence'. The Iraqis had already been told that they were independent under the terms of the Treaties of 1924 and 1927 as well as the more recent 1930 Treaty. The article discussed the implications of the latest Treaty, showing that in fact the country remained under British control, with annexes

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9. Ibid., 20.5.1932; also Knabenshue to State Department, 3.6.1932, USNA 890G.00/200.

10. Ibid., 10.6.1932.

to the Treaty which virtually handed the port of Basra and the railways to the British. Furthermore, the British had laid down stipulations to protect the minorities which could be used as a pretext to inferfere in internal affairs. The article concluded that "the independence which they have been proclaiming is non-existent in any real sense and will have no effect on daily life, but only in a legal and theoretical sense"[11]. In other articles the paper attacked British influence and domination over Iraq, which it called "Slavery"[12], saying that the British advisors' function is not to advise but to "watch over the Iraqis to make sure that they serve Britain's interests"[13]. Although this kind of comment may not appear particularly outrageous, it must be seen in the context of a period when no other newspaper carried on a campaign either against the particular iniquities of individual governments, or against the system as a whole.

al-Ahali was also greatly concerned with laws enacted at the time or those already in force. Many editorials accused the government of passing unconstitutional laws and of being biased in enforcing them, especially against its opponents. The paper challenged successive

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11. Ibid., 31.1.1932.

12. Ibid., 19.2.1932.

13. Ibid., 14.2.1932.

cabinets to implement their programmes and to enact just and comprehensive laws, pointing out that mere statements of intent would not effect improvements[14]. On many occasions the paper attacked the Tribal Civil and Criminal Disputes Regulation, which was not only outmoded and unjust, and deepened the division between the urban and the rural populations, but was also applied to the cities whenever the government needed to suppress the opposition, a practice which the paper considered unconstitutional[15]. The paper protested against the suppression of al-Ikha' newspaper by a Cabinet decision, deeming the action unconstitutional, because the closing of newspapers fell more properly within the jurisdiction of the courts[16]. Many articles followed dealing with the freedom of the press and other civil liberties[17] which the paper championed.

The paper was also concerned with the economic sector in general and the oil companies and their dealings with the Iraq government in particular. Early in 1932 there were differences between the oil companies and the government, as the company refused to pay royalties in gold,contrary to the terms of the agreement, and insisted on making payment in depreciated sterling. In an attempt to embarrass the government and to force it to take a

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14. Ibid., 15.3.1932.

15. Ibid., 16.3.1932; 31.3.1932.

16. Ibid., 18.3.1932.

17. Ibid., 21.3.1932.

strong line in dealing with the oil company, the paper was determined to bring the issue into the open while the government wanted to hush it up. In an editorial headed: "I.P.C. does not want to pay Iraq's share in gold", the paper explained the position of the oil companies and the lack of action on the part of the government[18]. This was preceded by an article on the fall of sterling. on the world market[19]. On 18.1.1932, another article appeared headed "The government's obscure position on the question of oil". It demanded that the government should not give any more concessions to the oil companies, since they had already received a great deal in return for very little, and that it should not accept any payment except in gold[20]. On 25 January, another article appeared: "The oil company refuses to pay in gold ... The ministry does not refer the conflict to an arbitration committee ... what does this mean?"[21] Two days later, it asked how the government had spent the proceeds from oil, as no worthwhile projects had been established[22]. The paper again insisted that the government should answer questions affecting the public interest and should explain its position on a number of important issues, particularly its position in the negotiations with the oil company[23].

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18. Ibid., 13.1.1932; see Sluglett, 1976, pp.194-199 for details of these negotiations.

19. Ibid., 12.1.1932.

20. Ibid., 18.1.1932.

21. Ibid., 25.1.1932.

22. Ibid., 27.1.1932.

23. Ibid., 2.2.1932; 3.3.1932.

Meanwhile the government was inviting bids for exploration rights in areas not covered by the earlier agreement. When it was announced that the British Oil Development Company had won the new agreement, al-Ahali wrote "Why has the government preferred the British Oil Development Company to the others ...? only because it is British and will only pay £20,000 a year?". It criticised the agreement,saying that it was only signed under political pressure, and suggested that the government should at least be a partner in such a profitable project[24]. Later the paper asked the government to confirm the truth of the rumour that the oil company was still refusing to pay royalties in gold[25] and pressed it to stand firm[26].

In these first months the paper threw down a number of major ideological challenges to the government in what amounted to a demand for the nationalisation of oil production. Thus on 9 March 1932, an editorial asked "The investment of oil revenue: should it be under government control or should it be left to individuals and companies?". It compared the capitalist and the socialist systems, and showing the advantages of the latter[27]. It urged the government to take over the oil concessions in order to receive all the proceeds and profits which could then be distributed for the benefit of the population

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24. Ibid., 13.2.1932.
25. Ibid., 18.2.1932.
26. Ibid., 3.3.1932.
27. Ibid., 9.3.1932.

as a whole rather than to a few rich and influential individuals[28]. In many editorials and articles, al-Ahali showed its concern for the national budget and the various mistakes in planning, suggesting that allocations for industry, agriculture, health and education should take precedence over unproductive expenditure such as propaganda, the various new Iraqi legations and expensive government buildings[29]. This area of the paper's concern owed much to Hadid's interest in economic affairs.

Other articles suggested reforms in taxation, and called for a progressive income tax. The paper reminded the government that the majority of Iraqis were poor and should not be burdened with . indirect taxes[30]. It suggested instead that the government should tax the rich and the foreign companies, especially the oil company. It also called for the dismissal of most of the foreign (British) advisers and experts, only keeping those who were urgently needed, and insisting that the salaries of those who stayed should be reduced to the level of Iraqis holding the same job[31]. The government was urged to economise and to stop wasteful expenditure[32].

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28. Ibid.
29. Ibid., 13.1.1932; 28.2.1932; 17.3.1932; 23.3.1932; 3.4.1932; 11.6.1932.
30. Ibid., 17.1.1932.
31. Ibid., 20.1.1932.
32. Ibid., 2.1.1932; 15.1.1932; 1,28.2.1932.

In general the paper drew the attention of the government and the public to the hardship and poor living conditions of the mass of the population. In one article it suggested that readers should either send in their complaints or come in person with their problems, particularly about the high cost of food, water, electricity and other essentials[33].

al-Ahali showed its concern for social conditions in different ways. As well as discussing the obstacles to progress, it suggested solutions. The paper also had a special section for arts and literature which included "the story of the day" which usually depicted real life situations. These stories were often adaptations of European works altered to relate to conditions in Iraq. The subject of peasants suffering at the hands of shaikhs, landowners and sirkals was always a focus of the paper's attention. It also described the exodus of peasants from the countryside to appalling living conditions in the cities, especially Baghdad, and the effect of the decline in agricultural production on the economy as a whole[34].

Again, the paper criticised outmoded customs and habits, and the way in which they blocked social progress. It also called for the adoption of modern attitudes to marriage and the abolition of expensive wedding ceremonies

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33. Ibid., 14.1.1932; 24.1.1932; 31.3.1932.

34. Ibid., 30.3.1932.

which young people could not afford[35]. Jama'at al-Ahali naturally laid great emphasis on both formal and informal education, and the paper carried articles on the extension of school education, the illiteracy campaign, and the reform and diversification of the educational system. Beginning from the very first issue of al-Ahali, a series of 67 articles were published on education in the Soviet Union, translated by 'Abd al-Fattah Ibrahim[36]. In his introduction Ibrahim stated that since readers were familiar with the French, British and American educational systems, the paper had decided to introduce them to a new system which attempted to spread vocational education (al-ta'lim al-intaji) among the peoples of the Soviet Union[37]. In January 1932, the paper announced that it was preparing an opinion poll, asking for suggestions for the reform of the educational system and the Department of Education itself[38]. There was an immediate response, and several letters and short articles were published on the subject, as well as criticisms of the government for not

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35. Ibid., 12.1.1932; 18.1.1932.

36. This was a book by Albert Bencovitch, Chancellor of the Second Soviet University, translated into English at Columbia University, and then into Arabic by Ibrahim. The Arabic title is al-Tarbiya al-Haditha fi Russia al-Soviatiya (Modern Education in the Soviet Union). Interview with Ibrahim.

37. al-Ahali, 4.1.1932.

38. Ibid., 21.1.1932.

allocating enough money to education generally[39]. al-Ahali published and discussed the findings of the Monroe Commission and articles by Fadhil al-Jamali and other educationalists on education in Iraq[40]. It also announced on 5 May 1932 a five-year plan for eradicating illiteracy which gained wide public support. The paper published news of the formation of committees all over the country to establish night schools and centres for illiterates[41]. Although this project was interrupted for several months when the newspaper was closed down, it started up again later with more drive and better organisation.

Ideological Articles

The discussion and analysis of different political ideologies and theories, particularly those of the Fabians, was a central concern of the paper. This activity was vital to its role as a means of political education, and was also designed to give wider publicity to the ideals of al-Sha'biya, which were explained through the writings of such figures as Fenner Brockway, Harold Laski and H.G. Wells. It also translated articles by well-known progressive writers. In addition, the paper had a weekly section on political and constitutional theories and their practical application[42]. In the second

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39. Ibid., 4.4.1932.

40. Ibid., 15.2.1932; 10.3.1932; 13.3.1932.

41. Ibid., 5.5.1932; 8.4.1932; 11.5.1932; 17.5.1932; 22.5.1932.

42. Ibid., 12.1.1932.

issue there was an article by H.G. Wells entitled "The World in 50 years time", in which the writer asserted that the cure for the deteriorating world conditions was the implementation of the principles of social democracy[43]. The next issue carried an article which explained the ideological roots of the French Revolution[44]. An article on socialism, the first of its kind to appear in Iraq, was published on 22 January 1932. Entitled "Socialism in the year 1932" it was written by a leader of the Independent Labour Party, Fenner Brockway[45]. In a series of articles 'Ali Haidar Sulaiman discussed the history of the co-operative movement urging the Iraqis to establish co-operatives[46]. The paper also translated an article "Rebellious Youth" which had won the first prize in a competition organised by the ILP's New Leader, containing a fierce attack on the capitalist system and calling for a socialist revolution[47]. Another article by H.G. Wells on the"present crisis in human affairs" was published on 4 March 1932. An article entitled "The difference between Socialism and Communism" explained

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43. Ibid., 3.1.1932.

44. Ibid., 4.1.1932.

45. Ibid., 22.1.1932.

46. Ibid., 27, 28, 29.1.1932.

47. Ibid., 28.2.1932.

the fact that although both ideologies are opposed to capitalism, there are many differences between them in principle and methodology[48]. Hadid wrote an article summarizing the life of G.B. Shaw, in which he emphasised his role in the Fabian Society and this was followed by another article discussing Shaw's contribution to literature[49]. An article by Harold Laski, "Thoughts on Reform", translated from the American periodical Nation, was published on 28 February 1932. The translator's introduction stated that "Professor Laski is considered one of the free thinkers of this age. He is a socialist and teaches political science at London University ... the best world in the professor's view is the democratic world which can only be achieved through equality of economic opportunity".

Arab affairs .

Although the paper devoted some space to news from the Arab countries, it was far more concerned about local and international developments. This somewhat lukewarm attitude toward Arab unity stems from the group's opposition to King Faisal and his "Arab policies", since they suspected him of pursuing this policy not for the benefit of the Syrians and Iraqis, but for his own personal grandeur. Furthermore, with the possible exception

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48. Ibid., 8.4.1932.

49. Ibid., 2,3.5.1932.

of Jamil, most members of Jama'at al-Ahali equated nationalism with Fascism[50]. Hence the coverage of the news of developments in the Arab world was not comparable to that given to the struggle in the Indian sub-continent, or the progress of Turkey, or, rather later, the Spanish Civil War. What news there was, concentrated mainly on the struggle for independence in Syria and Palestine and political developments in Egypt. However, the paper adopted a realistic and practical approach to the question of Palestine, Arab unity and independence which marked a complete departure from the empty political nostrums of the day which were repeated by politicians and the Iraqi and Arab newspapers and surrounded with a halo of sanctity. The traditional Arab nationalists looked to the Arab kings, especially Faisal and even 'Abd al-'Aziz ibn Sa'ud, to unite the Arabs, while al-Ahali called for liberation from foreign control, true independence and democratic governments for the Arab countries. Closer co-operation in political, economic and other fields would then be possible. al-Ahali continually emphasised that only the Arab population as a whole could gain independence, curb Zionist expansion and only then move towards unity. It called on the Arab countries to adopt a policy of nonco-operation with the colonial powers[51].

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50. See the section on Ideology, Ch.IV.

51. al-Ahali 29.1.1932; 21,22,26.2.1932.

The paper was particularly interested in developments in Egypt, most likely because of Jamil and Isma'il's sympathies with the Wafd party. al-Ahali viewed Egyptian political activities with respect and admiration as the Egyptians were better organised and more politically mature than the Iraqis[52]. This attitude is also noticeable in al-Ahali's coverage of developments in Syria, and the Syrian struggle for independence from the French. Most of the Arab news was concerned with Syria, again due to Jamil's influence. After Jamil left the paper, al-Ahali began to adopt an antagonistic attitude towards Arabs working in Iraq in general and the Syrians in particular, basically because most of them supported King Faisal and his Arab policies. This position cannot be said to have been a reflection of popular sentiment but it was a view held by certain patriotic (watani) and progressive elements who opposed Faisal and believed that the King was attempting to build himself up as an Arab leader rather than an Iraqi ruler.al-Ahali labelled those Arabs who supported him as mercenaries (murtazaqa)[53]. Another article showing al-Ahali's attitude towards non-Iraqi Arabs who supported King Faisal was aimed at Arab journalists visiting Iraq as guests of the government to attend the first industrial and agricultural exhibition

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52. Ibid., 22.1.1932; 13.2.1932.

53. Interviews with Ibrahim and Hadid.

in Baghdad. The paper asked them not to limit their observations to the items in the exhibition or to a few new buildings in the capital, but to focus their attention on the majority of the population and to investigate their social and economic conditions in order to determine whether real progress had been achieved in Iraq[54]. This was followed by an editorial on 24 April 1932, entitled "Why did the Syrian journalists come to Iraq?", accusing the journalists from Greater Syria and Egypt of giving a false impression of the progress Iraq had achieved under King Faisal. The paper claimed that those who came to Iraq to study the conditions of the country in the name of Arab Unity only did so because the government had paid them.

Eastern affairs

India and the Indian struggle for independence was one of the chief concerns of the paper, especially in the early days. A serialization of Mahatma Gandhi's memoirs in 97 parts began in the very first issue. In the section called "The Latest Telegrams" Indian resistance to British rule figured prominently. This wide coverage was a result of the group's admiration of Gandhi and Nehru and in their belief in popular resistance and defiance of the colonial power. In this way, al-Ahali was trying both directly and indirectly to influence Iraqi

54. al-Ahali, 6.4.1932.

as well as other Arab readers[55], and persuade them to adopt the Indian style of popular resistance to foreign rule, to awaken political consciousness and to prove that the imperialists were using the same methods everywhere. At the same time the paper drew a clear distinction between leaders like Nehru and Gandhi and rulers like King Faisal and 'Abd al'Aziz Ibn Sa'ud who co-operated with colonial powers. The first photograph to appear in the paper was of Nehru, in the centre of the front page, above a caption, "on the occasion of his being sentenced to prison for two and a half years - the maximum sentence"[56]. The second photograph was that of Gandhi, leading the civil disobedience campaign, which was also on the centre of the front page[57].

Turkey also received wide and very favourable coverage. It was depicted as an example of a reforming administration, and al-Ahali specifically praised the Turkish system and leadership for their efforts to improve the quality of life of their people. The paper reported on and urged the adoption of projects successfully implemented in Turkey such as "People's Houses" and the "People's Schools"[58].

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55. According to Jamil, some copies of the paper were posted to his friends in Syria.

56. al-Ahali 15.1.1932.

57. Ibid., 20.1.1932.

58. Ibid., 10.3.1932.

International Affairs

Unlike most of its competitors, al-Ahali reported widely on world affairs. The paper took a strictly anti-imperialist line, and always took the side of the oppressed and the underdog. In its early days it was briefly sympathetic to Mussolini, regarding his dictatorship as collective rather than personal[59]. The paper's attitude to Britain was in some ways contradictory; it attacked the British presence in Iraq and British colonial policy, but at the same time looked with envy at British democratic and parliamentary institutions, due to the strong influence of the Fabians on the group. This was also true of the paper's position towards the United States and France. In general al-Ahali supported democratic institutions and opposed capitalism and imperialism. The paper also devoted considerable space to articles on the Soviet Union. Ibrahim and Isma'il in particular clearly approved of the Soviet system of government, and as we have seen, the early issues of the paper contained a long series on Soviet education. At this stage reporting was largely confined to factual issues, but ideological matters were also discussed. This again distinguished al-Ahali from its contemporaries, which seldom referred to the Soviet Union or mentioned Communism or even socialism, since their main interests lay in Iraqi,

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59. See the section on Ideology, Ch.IV.

Arab and British affairs.

Political and economic developments in the Soviet Union appeared regularly in the section called "The Latest Telegrams" which was edited by Yusuf Isma'il, the brother of 'Abd al-Qadir and one of the early members of the Iraqi Communist Party. He used this section to popularise his beliefs, and this eventually resulted in Jamil's departure from the group. Yusuf Isma'il always praised the Soviet Union and attacked the capitalist countries which were intriguing against it[60]. During the Sino-Japanese conflict, in which the capitalist countries tried to drag the Soviet Union into the war, a headline appeared: "The capitalist countries are working to invade Russia because it is sincere in maintaining peace ... Russia is ready to deal with the situation ... and expresses its caution"[61].

On the economic side the paper published an article translated from the Economist on the progress of the five year plan in the Soviet Union[62], followed by another one entitled "Why does the Soviet Union need workers?...", describing the boom in the Russian economy and the need for man-power to fulfill the five year plan. Komsomol members volunteered to work in these projects, and women had entered the labour market and were working on the same footing with men[63]. "Lenin, the man from the Volga"

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60. al-Ahali, 18.1.1932.

61. Ibid., 13.2.1932.

62. Ibid., 24.1.1932.

63. Ibid., 25.1.1932.

was a translation published in two parts describing Lenin's activities before the October Revolution and his accomplishments after the establishment of the Soviet Union[64]. This was followed by an article about Stalin, under the title "Stalin; Russia's man of steel", showing how popular Stalin was despite his ruthlessness and stated that his popularity could not be compared with that of the old Russian Czars[65].

Youth

As it announced on its front page, al-Ahali was published by a group of young men, and thus addressed itself primarily to its own age group, which was the most fertile ground for the ideology of al-Sha'biya. In fact, the paper was called Jaridat al-Shabab (the young people's paper) by many of its readers and supporters[66]. As well as a section on Youth Affairs[67], there were numerous editorials and articles specifically addressed to young people, urging them to organize in societies[68], and to direct their energies to improving the life of the poor[69]. It urged them to boycott foreign

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64. Ibid., 15,21.4.1932.

65. Ibid., 22.4.1932.

66. It is interesting that the tracts (Rasa'il) mentioned earlier were specifically directed to young people.

67. al-Ahali, 11.1.1932.

68. Ibid., 26.2.1932; 6.4.1932.

69. Ibid., 15.4.1932.

imports and films[70] and criticised idleness and aimlessness[71], calling on young people to go to the countryside to educate and influence villagers by teaching them to read and write and demonstrating basic health techniques. They were also encouraged to teach them their rights and make them demand better living conditions[72]. This method recalls that of the narodniks or Russian Populists who also sent young people and students to the countryside[73].

The Campaigns

One of the most important features of al-Ahali was its establishment of a number of campaigns which were met with an enthusiastic response all over the country. These campaigns were meant to create a means of communication between Jama'at al-Ahali and the population at large to galvanise them and organise them in associations, and to solidify opposition to the government and British policies. Another important point of the campaigns was to demonstrate the government's incompetence and its neglect of much needed social welfare policies. One problem al-Ahali faced,which was partly of its own creation, was fighting too many opponents on too many fronts at the same time. The sheer number of campaigns meant that it spread itself too thin to be able to achieve

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70. Ibid., 2.5.1932.

71. Ibid., 11.6.1932.

72. Ibid., 8.3.1932.

73. Interview with Jamil. See also Batatu (1978),p.302.

any real success in most of them. In fact, it is remarkable that a fair degree of success was attained in at least some of them. The first popular campaign conducted by al-Ahali was against the high rates charged by the Baghdad Electric and Power Company in January 1932. A complaint about this was published in the first issue of al-Ahali[74], and it was followed by publication of the Company's balance sheets with the comment, "This is how much the Electric Company takes of our money..."[75]. These articles were followed with many complaints about the high rates the Company was charging the residents of Baghdad, in an attempt to create a suitable climate for a boycott[76]. As a result, the paper was closed for over ten months in July 1932, which delayed the action until later. Another major campaign which met with popular support was the boycott of the Bata shoe company, which was accused of competing unfairly with Iraqi shoe makers and thus squeezing them out of business[77]. Pupils and teachers from boys' and girls' schools responded to the boycott and organised committees to spread the campaign[78]. In an article, "Will Bata win or the Iraqis?" the paper showed the strength of popular feeling[79].

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74. al-Ahali, 2.1.1932.

75. Ibid., 15.1.1932.

76. Ibid., 24.1.1932; 29.3.1932; 29.4.1932.

77. Ibid., 25.3.1932.

78. Ibid., 26.4.1932.

79. Ibid., 22.4.1932. The manager of Bata approached al-Ahali asking for a full page advertisement in the paper, but Isma'il refused.

A similar campaign against the high admission charges to the Baghdad cinemas was widely supported by students[80]. The paper made a strong appeal for a boycott of foreign imports whose competition with local products had resulted in the disappearance of local handicrafts and artisans and workers losing their livelihood[81]. The paper reported that a group of workers were about to form "A society for the prevention of unemployment" (al-Batalah) (idleness),[82] to which the government responded, at least on paper, by forming a "Committee for the support of local manufacturers"[83]. Many articles and studies were published by the paper, calling for the establishment of a national bank - on the same lines as the Egyptian al-Bank al-Ahli. The paper urged the participation of Iraqi nationals with the government in the creation of a central bank which would be a first step in replacing the foreign banks which dominated the finances of the country[84].

A number of other calls to form societies for charitable and public purposes were made by al-Ahali, but these did not come to fruition. Many attempts were also made to start Mashru' al-Fils (the penny campaign), similar

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80. Ibid., 28,30.3.1932.

81. Ibid., 25.3.1932; 14.4.1932.

82. Ibid., 7.4.1932.

83. Ibid., 2.5.1932.

84. Ibid., 8.2.1932; 5,16,21.6.1932; 2.7.1932.

to the al-qirsh campaign which had been operating successfully in Egypt. This campaign tried to collect at least one fils (one penny) from as many citizens as possible to form a corporation to set up much needed industrial projects[85]. The paper also campaigned for the creation and development of summer resorts in the north[86], and called for the establishment of people's houses and people's schools on Turkish lines, to be given to the peasants and workers, and built and administered by the people themselves[87].

Perhaps the most potentially successful of al-Ahali's projects was the campaign to eradicate illiteracy. A detailed article on 5 May 1932 explained the various organizational committees, the financing and administration and the teaching staff. This was followed by an editorial inviting the government to state its views on the project, which immediately attracted widespread support among the educated classes, and students in institutions all over the country pledged their participation, informing the paper that they had formed preparatory committees and were ready to leave for the countryside[88]. An article declared that "the young people have pledged their

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85. Ibid., 6.5.1932.

86. Ibid., 6.4.1932; 1.5.1932.

87. Ibid., 8,10,11,24.3.1932.

88. Ibid., 11,13,19,22.5.1932.

support for the five year plan to eradicate illiteracy ... but the government remains silent!!"[89]. The suppression of al-Ahali newspaper for almost a year meant that the campaign was temporarily abandoned until the paper reappeared in 1933.

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89. Ibid., 17.5.1932.

3. Personal Conflicts

(a) The departure of Husain Jamil and its effect on the group

On 14 April 1932, the paper appeared with a new owner, 'Abd al-Qadir Isma'il. Husain Jamil remained managing director, but on 17 June, his name disappeared altogether. A month later he accepted a government job as Assistant Prosecutor at Hilla. Jamil's departure was the result of personal and ideological differences between himself and 'Abd al-Qadir Isma'il, which surfaced in the early months of publication and centred around the style and contents of the paper. Since such disagreements continued to be important in the organisation of al-Ahali, it is worth examining the episode in some detail.

At the beginning, Jamil and Isma'il worked almost full-time on the paper, assisted by Yusuf Isma'il and Yusuf Matti, both of whom had Communist connections. The first and earliest contention between Jamil and 'Abd al-Qadir Isma'il was over the paper's basic orientation. Jamil claims that he wanted the paper to include different features and sections to attract the average reader such as sport, general information, women, youth and literature, while at the same time introducing the ideas and ideology of al-Ahali (al-Sha'biya)[1]. Isma'il, on the other hand, wanted al-Ahali to be a wholly ideological newspaper in which every article should be a reflection of al-Ahali ideology; anything else he considered pandering to commercial

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1. Interview with Jamil.

considerations. He wanted to adopt the style and format of the Egyptian paper al-Shura[2] and thought that the al-Ahali movement and its paper should,

> follow a clear and well-defined ideology, and take a clear line on opposing the Iraq Government and the British presence and influence in the country.

Isma'il now attributes the conflict with Jamil to their social backgrounds; Jamil, in his view, "has taught himself to survive under all circumstances, as he wanted to appease everyone"[3]. Whether the conflict derives from their different backgrounds is a matter of opinion, but the two men have very distinct personalities and subsequent events have proved that they do not share a common political ideology.

Another source of conflict between Jamil and Isma'il was the foreign news section called Latest Telegrams, which was the responsibility of Isma'il's brother Yusuf. Yusuf Isma'il and Yusuf Matti would translate the foreign telegrams, but before sending them to the press, they would alter them slightly and add a provocative headline to each telegram. Thus they would add a cynical twist to items about capitalists, fascists, or reactionaries, and words of praise for national liberation movements, socialists and progressives. Thus the news always attacked the British government in India and supported the Republic

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2. al-Shura was a strictly ideological newspaper published by the Wafd party in the 1920s.

3. Interview with Isma'il.

in Spain. One item reported pro-Chinese demonstrations by Communists in Athens, and another suggested that Turkey was turning Communist on the Russian model, because civil servants were only taking a quarter of their salaries and turning the remainder over to the government in savings bonds[4]. Jamil objected to this kind of presentation, which he considered would arouse unnecessary resentment against a newly established newspaper, and eventually alienate it from many sections of society. If this trend was allowed to continue, the paper would only appeal to a small minority of progressive elements, and would thus not be able to survive financially or otherwise[5].

'Abd al-Qadir Isma'il fully supported his brother and considered that the telegrams were both a source of attraction and completely in line with the paper's ideology. However, the final blow came when Yusuf published a telegram reporting on a speech of the Pope under the heading 'Hypocrisy ... one good deed is better than years of prayer.' After reporting the speech, the article continued 'Then the Pope knelt down to pray surrounded by aristocrats.' On the occasion of the Sino-Japanese war Yusuf wrote of the Pope's prayers for the Chinese: 'Prayers and hymns will protect the Chinese people.'[6] These items infuriated local Catholics who complained to

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4. al-Ahali 24, 28.1.1932; 5.2.1932; 5.5.1932.

5. Ibid., 14.2.1932.

6. Ibid., 17.2.1932.

Jamil about these insults to the head of their church. Seizing on this complaint, which he felt he must uphold, Jamil demanded that Yusuf be dismissed: otherwise he would leave the paper himself. 'Abd al-Qadir sent his brother away for a while, but gradually relations between Isma'il and Jamil became intolerable. Jamil recalls that he would suggest that items should be published, and Isma'il would object or ignore them, and he himself would do the same[7]. This was reflected in the format of the newspaper, for on one day news from the Arab world would appear in capital letters on the front page, with telegrams and world news relegated to the third or fifth pages, while a few days later this would all be reversed. Sometimes news from the Arab countries would disappear altogether[8].

Eventually, Jamil decided to let Isma'il have his way in the running of the paper, and transferred ownership to him in April 1932, while remaining managing director. However, the paper's increasingly leftward stance and its more aggressive attacks on the government and the political system became less and less congenial to Jamil, or, as Isma'il alleges, to 'Jamil's future ambitions'[9]. Hence on 17 June Jamil resigned and was replaced by another

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7. Interview with Jamil.

8. e.g. al-Ahali between February and June 1932.

9. Interview with Isma'il. However, at this stage Jamil cannot be accused of having high ambitions, since the post at Hilla was relatively modest. In fact he was transferred to 'Ana a few months later because of his political activities.

lawyer, Isma'il al-Ghanim, thus ending his official connection with the project he had helped to create. However, he remained on good terms with Jama'at al-Ahali and later contributed articles to the paper under a pseydonym[10].

'Abd al-Qadir Isma'il was unable to run the paper on his own, and sent an urgent request to his cousin 'Abd al-Fattah Ibrahim who was working as a translator at the port authority in Basra, asking him to come to Baghdad to assist him. Ibrahim arranged a transfer to Baghdad with the help of Nasrat al-Farisi, then director general of the Ministry of Justice who was a sympathiser of Jama'at al-Ahali[11].

Meanwhile, al-Ahali carried on its blistering attacks on the government, and exhorted young people to utilise their energies to work hard to reform the deteriorating condition of the country[12]. After Jamil left the paper its style became less subtle and more emotional, and its articles played on the emotions of young people, using the exaggerated rhetoric typical of the Arab journalism of the day. Furthermore, its tone became more strongly parochial (iqlimi), criticising the Syrians and other Arabs working in Iraq and accusing them of simply seeking material gain. It attacked Nuri and Faisal's scheme for

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10. Interview with Jamil.

11. Interview with Ibrahim.

12. al-Ahali, 18,19.6.1932.

the unity of the fertile crescent under Faisal's leadership, and criticised supporters of the project for their self-interest. In general it showed more concern for Iraqi and international affairs, and took less note of events in the Arab world[13].

The government only took any serious notice of al-Ahali when it directed its attacks against individual members of the ruling class. In late June 1932, a headline appeared: 'Oppression will not last ... because nations do not die.' It attacked the corruption of the system, in which an official's main concern was to amass as much wealth as possible. Finally, it pointed out that the ruling class knew well that it could not stay in power for ever, that their maladministration would hasten the people's awakening and thus push forward the day of liberation[14]. A few days later another editorial appeared under the heading 'What benefits has the national government brought to the people?', showing again that nothing substantial had been achieved for ordinary individuals. Instead, autocratic rule simply served vested interests, as had traditionally been the case[15]. On 28 June there was another attack on Nuri's government, particularly for its unity scheme: 'Will the fascist comedy be repeated?

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13. Ibid., 19.6.1932, 18.6.1932, 24.4.1932, 22.6.1932, 20.6.1932, 1.7.1932, 2.7.1932, 3.7.1932, 26.4.1932, 27.4.1932, 9.5.1932, 5.5.1932.

14. Ibid., 14.6.1932.

15. Ibid., 21.6.1932.

What is behind these claims??'[16]. On this occasion the paper was given a warning by the Ministry of Interior, which it published in its own columns the next day. However, al-Ahali was not deterred, and published even more forceful attacks on the government and the political system. 'The content is the same although the outward form may change ' introduced an attack on the ruling class, who had served first the Ottomans, then the British, and were now serving the so-called 'national government'. The ruling class has always shown its insensitivity to the people's welfare, while taking all the advantages for itself. They do not want to lose their positions, whatever the cost to the population at large[17]. This particular article seems to have been the last straw, and the paper was suspended for three months in July 1932[18].

The paper reappeared for a few days in October, with al-Ghanim as managing director and a new owner, 'Aziz Sharif[19]. The first editorial contained a sharp attack on the government for having closed the paper for what it described as a 'summer holiday'. It declared that the paper would continue to oppose the government as long as it acted in an undemocratic and unrepresentative fashion.

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16. Ibid., 28.6.1932.

17. Ibid., 6.7.1932.

18. Knabenshue to State Department: 16.7.1932, USNA 890G.00/209.

19. Isma'il's name disappeared because Rashid 'Ali disliked him, but in fact he and Ibrahim continued to be responsible for the day to day running of the paper.

It made sarcastic reference to Iraq's entry to the League of Nations three days earlier, and ended:

> The government exists to serve the people, not to suppress them. If it goes astray, the people have the right to criticise it, and call it to account for its misdeeds. We, the sons of the people, from their flesh and blood, demand that their interests be rightly served. This is what we stood for, this is what we wrote, and this is why we were suppressed. Here we stand again, sincere in our beliefs and passionate in our commitment.[20]

The same issue contained an article on a theme later taken up as a slogan by the Iraqi Communist Party: 'What is the object of our struggle? A free country and a happy people.' It explained that the working out of the dialectical processes would eventually secure the fulfilment of this aim. The next day's issue contained an article headed 'We are popularists',which explained the ideology of al-Sha'biya, and expressed their demands for 'government by the people for the people: the present government does not meet these conditions in any way.'[21] This time the government wasted no time in closing the paper down after only two days, and it remained suspended for six months, although the original order had been for a year[22]. During this period two volumes of Rasa'il al-Ahali ila al-Shabab were published, both by 'Abd al-Fattah Ibrahim.

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20. al-Ahali, 7.10.1932.

21. Ibid., 8.10.1932.

22. Knabenshue to State Department: 20.10.1932, USNA 890G.91/2, which mentions the suspension for a year.

The first, 'Ala Tariq al-Hind, appeared at the end of 1932, while al-Sha'biya Vol. 1 appeared early in 1933.

The paper began publication once more on 21 April 1933, with 'Aziz Sharif as its owner and manager. The first editorial was headed 'al-Ahali returns' criticising the paper's suppression as an irresponsible act. The article clearly projected self-confidence as it declared the futility of any government's attempt to choke a genuine ideology, which it claimed had spread like wildfire; al-Sha'biya, as had been expected, had become the "destiny of youth"[23]. Another editorial followed the next day on Rashid' 'Ali's Government and its position on the Treaty of 1930, raising many questions about the formation of the 'coalition Cabinet', which included 'the man who signed the Treaty' (Nuri al-Sa'id) as well as the 'leaders of the opposition' Rashid 'Ali and al-Hashimi. The paper asked the new Cabinet to deal with the Treaty, or rather to abolish it, as a matter of urgency. The members of the Cabinet were described as

> The men responsible for the difficulties of the last 13 years, who have played on the opposition as well as on the government sides. The only new personality is the Minister of Justice (Muhammad Zaki, who was sympathetic to al-Ahali) modern in his education, modern in his thinking, with youthful energy and enthusiasm.[24]

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23. al-Ahali, 21.4.1933.

24. Ibid., 22.4.1933.

This article was an attempt to sound out the new Cabinet's policies and also to pressure Rashid 'Ali and Yasin (the al-Ikha leaders) to put their previous promises into effect by continuing their opposition to the 1930 Treaty in line with the al-Ta'akhi Charter[25]. al-Ahali's position of greater restraint towards the government was obviously influenced by Ja'far Abu al-Timman, who had taken up a wait-and-see attitude towards the government. To put more pressure to bear on Rashid and Yasin, another editorial appeared on 23 April discussing the Cabinet's programme and expressing its apprehension at the surprise declaration by the cabinet that it would 'respect international commitments'; the paper wondered whether this meant the acceptance of the 1930 Treaty. It also wondered about the government's position in circumstances when international commitments might clash with national aspirations[26]. al-Ahali continued to show concern for the general condition of the population and the policies of the government, and continued to deal with the same issues, although in a somewhat more emotional fashion. It began to focus more attention on the plight of the agricultural sector and the wretched condition of the peasants[27].

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25. See page 55.

26. al-Ahali, 23.4.1933.

27. Ibid., e.g. various issues in May and June 1933.

(b) The Departure of Jamil 'Abd al-Wahhab and Khalil Kanna

When 'Abd al-Wahhab and Kanna were students at Baghdad School of Law, they were imprisoned with Isma'il and others for their active opposition to the 1930 Treaty. As a result they became friends and associates of Isma'il and Jamil, and helped the group in the early days of the publication of the newspaper. After 'Abd al-Wahhab and Kanna's graduation in 1932 they set up a law office which became a meeting place for Jama'at al-Ahali and supporters. Soon after Husain Jamil's departure, Jamil 'Abd al-Wahhab found the course of Jama'at al-Ahali too difficult and dangerous for his liking so he accepted a government position as a judge in October 1932, and subsequently severed all ties with the group and the paper.

Khalil Kanna remained with the group rather longer, contributing articles and translations, though he also veered gradually to the right. However, when Jamil left the paper and 'Abd al-Fattah Ibrahim returned from Basra, al-Ahali began to turn towards the left. In consequence Kanna broke away from the movement, as he found himself out of tune with the progressive ideas al-Ahali had embraced. He described the members of Jama'at al-Ahali in his memoirs as a

> mixture of leftists, communists, opportunists and other ill-intentioned individuals who concealed themselves behind the banners of

democracy and popularism.[28]

The departure of 'Abd al-Wahhab and Kanna, and more significantly, that of Husain Jamil, meant the loss of the moderate influence and the dominance of the more radical wing, comprising 'Abd al-Fattah Ibrahim, 'Abd al-Qadir Isma'il and 'Aziz Sharif. The change became particularly noticeable in the pages of the newspaper. However, the group was now to be joined by a political personality of considerable influence, Kamil al-Chadirchi, whose arrival brought about important changes in its style and practice. This was because al-Chadirchi was the first practical politician to be recruited to al-Ahali, and the first person to have access to the traditional channels of political influence.

4. Kamil al-Chadirchi joins al-Ahali

Kamil al-Chadirchi, who had been on the Executive Committee of al-Ikha' party and was the editor of its paper, began to drift away from the party due to disagreements with the party leadership, particularly over Rashid 'Ali's acceptance of the post of Chief of the Royal Diwan in November 1932. The rift became complete when al-Ikha' agreed to form a government in

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28. Kanna K., al-Iraq Amsuhu wa Ghaduhu (Iraq, its past and future), (Beirut 1966), p.52. In 1935 Kanna joined Nadi al-Muthanna and was subsequently imprisoned for his involvement in the May 1941 uprising. In 1946 he joined Hizb al-Istiqlal, from which he resigned to settle down with Nuri al-Sa'id's Hizb al-Ittihad al-Dasturi (Constitutional Union Party) (see Longrigg 1953, p.355). He married Nuri's niece and remained his right arm and protégé, holding several ministerial positions until the collapse of the monarchy.

March 1933 without insisting on any revision to the 1930 Treaty, which was against Wathiqa al-Ta'akhi (The Ta'akhi Charter) which they had signed with Hizb al-Watani in March 1931[29]. Over the two years, and particularly in the course of the meetings of the leadership of the two parties, al-Chadirchi had developed great admiration and respect for Ja'far Abu al-Timman and a close friendship with Hikmat Sulaiman. On the other hand he had grown disenchanted with Yasin al-Hashimi and Rashid 'Ali's tactics and ambitions.

At the beginning of 1932, while al-Chadirchi was still editor of al-Ikha' paper, al-Ahali newspaper appeared. al-Chadirchi wrote: "When the paper (al-Ahali) was published, I followed it with interest. I found it a liberal paper in harmony with my own ideas in many ways."[30] Obviously moved by the quality of the new paper, al-Chadirchi wrote an article welcoming it and wishing it well in its endeavours[31]. He went on to support the demands made by al-Ahali, sometimes even echoing al-Ahali editorials in his own newspaper[32]. al-Chadirchi began his contacts with Jama'at al-Ahali

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29. Longrigg (1953),p.184; also al-Chadirchi (1970), p.25. al-Chadirchi states that Yasin al-Hashimi was behind a conflict between Hikmat Sulaiman and himself for insinuating to him that Hikmat Sulaiman was behind Rashid 'Ali's acceptance of the position.

30. al-Chadirchi (1970), p.27.

31. al-Ikha' al-Watani No.134, 13.1.32. Quoted al-'Umari,K., (1968), p.43.

32. Ibid.

during the latter part of 1932. He suggested to Jamil 'Abd al-Wahhab and Khalil Kanna that they should share their law office with him and he began to attend their meetings regularly. Eventually he offered them a house for their meetings and discussions. In his memoirs al-Chadirchi explains these early contacts:

> I believe that the desire to work together came from both sides ... For my part, I contacted 'Abd al-Fattah Ibrahim, then 'Abd al-Qadir Isma'il, and the more we met, the stronger our relationship grew. We met in my house (Ibrahim, Hadid and 'Ali Haidar Sulaiman)[33] and we discussed the need to establish a socio-political programme as the foundation for a political movement and a scheme for al-Ahali to follow. In early 1933 al-Ahali newspaper began to propagate this ideology under the name of al-Sha'biya.[34]

However, al-Chadirchi's motives for leaving Hizb al-Ikha' 'al-Watani and joining Jama'at al-Ahali are still disputed by his former colleagues[35]. Ibrahim believes that Kamil al-Chadirchi was pressured into leaving al-Ikha' by Yasin al-Hashimi, who ignored him, refused to take him seriously, humiliated him and injured his pride. Ibrahim considers al-Chadirchi's joining al-Ahali to have been an act of

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33. al-Chadirchi does not include Isma'il.

34. al-Chadirchi's recollections are definitely inaccurate. The principles of al-Sha'biya had been agreed upon by Jama'at al-Ahali in 1931 and the summary of al-Sha'biya (called the programme) was published in a pamphlet in 1932. Besides al-Ahali newspaper had been propagating the ideology since the paper first appeared in January 1932.

35. Ibrahim, Hadid and Isma'il are still (March 1980) alive; al-Chadirchi died in 1968.

desperation and a way of getting back at Yasin[36].

Isma'il attests to al-Chadirchi's belief in socialism and democracy and describes him as a progressive person who might well have been too much to the left for the al-Ikha' leadership. Hadid asserts that al-Chadirchi had similar political views to those of al-Ahali, and feels that it was natural that he should leave the traditional party and join a more progressive and radical movement.

Exactly how al-Chadirchi came to join al-Ahali is also not entirely clear; Isma'il and Ibrahim say that he was accepted first as an associate and then gradually worked his way up within the group. al-Chadirchi's memoirs are borne out by Hadid's version, which is quoted below. It should be remembered that prior to al-Chadirchi's arrival the group did not contain a single 'practical' politician, or member of a prominent family[37].

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36. Yasin was friendly with Kamil's brother Ra'uf and had secured employment for Kamil since 1925. Kamil was also well connected with other politicians (see below). Kamil's ambition and some of his objections to Ikha' policy seem to have been the causes of the friction between Yasin, Rashid 'Ali and himself. Kamil was not nominated as one of the party's deputies in 1932, which may well have prompted his formal break with the leadership.

37. Furthermore, al-Chadirchi, who was born in 1897, was several years older than the founders of al-Ahali.

> When al-Chadirchi made these contacts, we the founders of al-Ahali met and evaluated his overtures. We came to the following conclusions; "al-Chadirchi has similar political views to our own, and is also a well-known and distinguished political personality. It is to our advantage that we should establish a working basis with him. He is experienced in Iraqi politics and to an unseasoned political movement like ours he could be a great asset. He would get us out of our shell and he could transform us from a dogmatic into a realistic (practical) political movement". This principle was later to be applied in the cases of 'Abu al-Timman and Hikmat Sulaiman.[38]

Two significant points emerge which show al-Chadirchi's character in a more favourable light, and contrast with the assessment of Ibrahim and others. In the first place it is clear that al-Chadirchi severed his ties with al-Ikha' on his own initiative, at a time when they had actually achieved power, showing that he was not after spoils and personal gain, and that he possessed a much higher standard of principles and ethics than most Iraqi politicians of that era. Secondly, it is clear that in joining al-Ahali movement he tied himself to the most ideologically extreme opposition group existing at the time. If he did not possess strong and well defined beliefs, al-Chadirchi would have found more comfort and glory as well as spoils, in joining Nuri al-Sa'id's camp (like Muzahim al-Pachachi) or by aligning himself with al-Madfa'i and 'Ali Jawdat. Better still, he could have

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38. Interview with Hadid. According to Siddiq Shanshal, Yunis al-Sab'awi was convinced that al-Chadirchi left al-Ikha' and joined al-Ahali for ideological reasons.

moved closer to King Faisal through the good offices of Mahmud Subhi al-Daftari, his brother-in-law and first cousin, or through Naji Shawkat, another brother-in-law. However, it must be admitted that once settled in al-Ahali, al-Chadirchi soon proved too ambitious for the style of collective leadership which had characterised the group until his arrival. His tactics, which were aimed at securing the leadership for himself, harmed the principles and ideology of the movement and weakened the position of the founders, especially Ibrahim[39].

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39. In Independent Iraq Khadduri wrongly asserts that al-Chadirchi joined al-Ahali in 1934 (p.72) and Laqueur, W.2., Communism and Nationalism in the Middle East (London 1956) repeats the error on p.177. It is clear from conversations with the founders that al-Chadirchi's early contacts began in 1932, and that he became a full member in mid-1933.

Chapter IX

The Development and Role of Jama'at al-Ahali between 1933 and 1935

With the arrival of Kamil al-Chadirchi, and the consolidation of the group in the course of 1932 and 1933 through the activities of its newspaper, Jama'at al-Ahali attained the status of a popular and well-established political movement. It emerged clearly as a progressive group, in active opposition not only to particular governments but to the political system as a whole and to the overriding influence of Britain. Thus successive governments dealt with Jama'at al-Ahali severely and subjected the paper to lengthy and frequent suppression and its members to persecution and imprisonment.

In this chapter, Jama'at al-Ahali's position will be discussed with respect to the Assyrian incident, the death of King Faisal in 1933, and the boycott of the Baghdad Electric and Power company in 1934. Other activities will also be mentioned, including the formation of the society for the eradication of illiteracy, the establishment of the Baghdad club, the formation of the al-Sha'biya secret society, the recruitment of Ja'far Abu al-Timman and Hikmat Sulaiman to the group, the departure of some of the early members and the publication of various newspapers. The chapter ends with an account of Jama'at al-Ahali's early involvement in practical politics.

The Assyrian Incident

al-Ahali devoted its full attention to the Assyrian conflict and took a clear and strong position on it from the beginning to the end. It reported the background of the Assyrian problem, laying the main responsibility on a combination of British interference and the weakness of the Iraq government. The first article appeared on 25 June 1933 as the news of the trouble began to filter through to Baghdad. In an editorial entitled "The Assyrian and the Ally", the paper traced back the promises made by the British to the Assyrians during World War I, particularly the settlements in northern Iraq and the formation of the Levies. It went on to demand that the impasse should be resolved quickly and decisively by the government threatening to act against British interests in Iraq, perhaps by a boycott of British goods.

After a lull, which coincided with the negotiations with the Mar Shim'un, the paper returned to the attack at the end of July. An article headed "The Assyrian Question and the Present Political Situation" blamed the British once more and ended by saying "Britain should be made to understand that the policy of divide and rule is a policy of the past"[1]. The Acting British Ambassador, Mr. Ogilvie-Forbes submitted a formal complaint to the

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1. al-Ahali, 30.7.1933.

Iraqi Foreign Ministry,

> conveying the sense of concern with which H.M. Government view the campaign of slander and defamation which the Iraqi press is conducting against Great Britain and inquiring what action the Iraqi Government propose to take.[2]

In due course the Iraq Government issued a warning to al-Ahali newspaper[3] which the paper published, accompanied by another strong attack on British policy. The Acting British Ambassador was infuriated and made an urgent official request to the Prime Minister for a public dementi[4]. He had an audience with King Faisal in which the latter put on one of his finest dramatic performances:

> King Feisal with a gesture of shame seized offending paper from my hand and threw it under his chair. He asked me to convey his sincere apologies to His Majesty's Government. I said I hoped that something would be done to the editor and His Majesty promised to take up matter personally with the Prime Minister.[5]

al-Ahali was not deterred from continuing its attacks

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2. Mr. Ogilvie Forbes to S/S Foreign Affairs: 20.7.1933, FO.371/16916/E4082.
Foreign Office to Acting Ambassador, Mr. Ogilvie Forbes: 28.7.1933, FO.371/16916/E4082; 2.8.1933, FO.371/16916/E44339; and 9.8.1933, FO.371/16916/E4478.

3. al-Ahali, 6.8.1933.

4. Foreign Office to Acting Ambassador: 28.7.1933, FO.371/16910/E4082.

5. Mr. Ogilvie Forbes to S/S Foreign Affairs: 3.8.1933, FO.371/16910/E4358.

on British policy, and in fact urged an even more vigorous campaign against Britain and France for having co-ordinated their efforts to create such a dangerous situation[6]. As a result the government was virtually forced to ban the paper for ten days[7].

After the storm had subsided somewhat, the paper reappeared on 19 August, but continued its original line on the Assyrians. It praised the Army for the way it had dealt with the "renegades", and hailed those who had supported it in eliminating the threat to Iraqi sovereignty, particularly Prince Ghazi, Hikmat Sulaiman and Bakr Sidqi, while criticising the King and Nuri for their concern for the interests of Britain rather than those of Iraq. The paper criticised Sir Francis Humphrys' early return to Iraq, and the likelihood that he would interfere in what were essentially internal affairs[8].

After the fighting had ended, the paper described the return of Hikmat Sulaiman to Baghdad in glowing terms, but much greater adulation accompanied the reporting of the popular reception for the victorious Army in Mosul,

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6. al-Ahali, 7.8.1933; also Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs: 18.8.1933, FO.371/16910/E4782.

7. Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs:
8.8.1933, FO.371/16910/E4433;
18.8.1933, FO.371/16910/E4782.
The Report also included the Iraqi Foreign Ministry's apology for the press campaign against the British government and informed the British Embassy of the Council of Ministers' decision on suspending al-Ahali newspaper.

8. al-Ahali, 19,20,21.8.1933.

Kirkuk and Baghdad. It also published letters of support for the Army, and other letters from individuals in all walks of life volunteering to enlist to save the country from the Assyrian aggression[9]. The paper encouraged the formation of committees to raise funds for the families of those who had been "martyred" on active service[10]. It also published a letter from Bakr Sidqi, the Commander in Chief of 'Imad Force and the Northern Region, addressed to the people of Mosul, thanking them for their generous welcome, which ended on an interesting note:

> Our thanks are coupled with admiration and appreciation. I present our thanks as a pledge for the deeds which the army will perform in the future as part of its great duty, which it is preparing to carry out. Let both the Army and the people await that day.[11]

The paper continued to follow the development of the Assyrian problem with great interest, particularly the discussions of the case at Geneva, and the various schemes to settle the Assyrians in other parts of the world.

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9. Ibid., 25.8.1933, 2.9.1933.
The paper reported, for instance, that the barbers will shave the Iraqi officers and soldiers free for three days, as well as the café owners, who would have the soldiers free. Of the two main restaurants in the capital one gave a free lunch and the other free dinner.

10. al-Ahali, 19,20,21,23,24.8.1933.

11. Ibid., 25.8.1933.

It also published over a hundred official documents relating to the Assyrian conflict[12] as well as the government's Blue Book on the Recent Assyrian Mutiny[13].

The Death of King Faisal

On hearing of Faisal's death on 8 September, Jama'at al-Ahali met and decided to publish the news in a casual and almost indifferent manner, which contrasted sharply with the grief-stricken reaction of the rest of the press. Most of the issue, in which Faisal's death was reported in a few paragraphs, was addressed to the young Ghazi, praising his position during the Assyrian conflict, which had 'gained him the love of the people', and urging him to 'protect the constitution' and to 'stand on the side of the people'[14]. As a result there were angry reactions, and even attempts to burn down the press building[15], and this, combined with the departure of 'Ali Haidar Sulaiman, led to the publication of a special 'disaster issue' ('addad al-faji'a) on 15 September. It contained one photograph of Faisal and two of Ghazi, and described the funeral procession and the accompanying scenes of grief.

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12. Ibid., from 2.10.1933 to 2.11.1933.

13. Ibid., 1.10.1933.

14. Ibid., 9.9.1933.

15. Interview with Isma'il, also al-Chadirchi (1970) p.28.

The Departure of 'Ali Haidar Sulaiman

al-Ahali's attitude to the death of King Faisal was the apparent reason for 'Ali Haidar Sulaiman's departure from Jama'at al-Ahali, which lost the group the services of one of its most brilliant members. Sulaiman reacted strongly and unexpectedly to the death of the King, and wrote an article eulogising him, pointing out that Faisal's death was a great loss not only to Iraq but to the whole Arab nation, which he demanded that 'Abd al-Qadir Isma'il should publish. Isma'il informed him of the group's decision and refused to print it[16]. As a result, Sulaiman's relations with Jama'at al-Ahali became somewhat distant and he began to absent himself from the group's meetings. When the Minister of Interior Naji Shawkat discovered that Sulaiman had fallen out with the group, he asked him to become his private secretary which he accepted. He told 'Abd al-Fattah Ibrahim that he was tired of being a secondary school teacher, which would take him nowhere and did not suit his ambitions. This may explain Sulaiman's behaviour at the death of the King. He later became the Director-General of the Ministry of Interior and also served as Ambassador in Washington[17].

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16. Ibid.

17. Interview with Ibrahim, Isma'il and Hadid. Politicians like Nuri al-Sa'id, Yasin al-Hashimi, Jamil al-Madfa'i and 'Ali Jawdat frequently lured the educated to their side by offering them good positions, thus weakening the opposition. Nuri offered Ibrahim and Hadid posts as diplomats which they refused, and Isma'il refused to work for the government altogether.

Jam'iyyat al-Sa'i li Mukafahat al-'Ummiyya
(The Society for the Eradication of Illiteracy)

When al-Ahali newspaper reappeared on 21 April 1933, after being suppressed for six months, it resumed its interest in one of its earlier campaigns, the eradication of illiteracy. It announced that it would publish a special supplement on illiteracy which eventually appeared on 30 June. The editorial was headed "The enlightenment of the people comes before everything else", and was addressed to the young and the students, both men and women, workers, self-employed and civil servants, urging them to establish 'people's houses' in every part of the country in order to teach as many people as possible. The article ended with the encouraging news that in Baghdad there is "a group of young men who are determined to start this task"[18].

This group of young men were members of Jama'at al-Ahali headed by Ibrahim and Hadid whose application for the formation of the Society for the Eradication of Illiteracy had been granted by the Minister of the Interior on 25 September 1933. Meanwhile, the paper was publishing letters of support for the project from people of all walks of life who were pledging to establish centres for the eradication of illiteracy. Although the campaign coincided with the Assyrian conflict, the paper continued its coverage of both with almost equal enthusiasm.[19]

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18. al-Ahali, 30.6.1933.

19. Ibid., 18.9.1933; 5.8.1933; 31.7.1933.

On 7 October, al-Ahali published what it called "The first step towards eradicating illiteracy" and the new Society's constitution (al-Nidham al-Asasi). The constitution was more appropriate to a political party or organisation than a society for the eradication of illiteracy, which supports Jama'at al-Ahali's claim that they used the society as a front for their political activities.

In order to ensure the society's success, Jama'at al-Ahali decided, under the influence of Kamil al-Chadirchi, to include prominent personalities on the executive committee. The first name which was suggested and was met with instant approval was that of Ja'far Abu al-Timman. al-Chadirchi and Ibrahim both give themselves the credit for having approached him first[20]. Abu al-Timman, being the man he was, was pleased to participate in a project which was clearly widely beneficial, although at that time he was deeply disillusioned by Iraqi politics, and only a week after his election to the presidency of the society on 26 October, he announced that he was retiring from politics. After further consultation Jama'at al-Ahali succeeded in forming the executive committee which consisted of Abu al-Timman, Nasrat al-Farisi, Kamil al-Chadirchi, Dr Fadhil al-Jamali, Muhammad Hadid, 'Abd al-Fattah Ibrahim, and 'Ali Haidar Sulaiman. The

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20. Interview with Ibrahim, also al-Chadirchi (1970), p.29.

Committee elected Abu al-Timman president, al-Farisi vice-president, Ibrahim secretary, and Hadid treasurer[21]. The society published a 24-page pamphlet which was distributed all over the country, describing similar attempts to eradicate illiteracy in Turkey, Russia, Italy, Mexico and China. It called for a combined effort of the people and the government in order for the campaign to be completely successful. The society ended the pamphlet with this call:

> The society sends this appeal to every Iraqi, government employee, merchant or worker, to join its ranks and to perform his duty, whether as an active or an associate member. It calls on all those who want to join to do so as soon as possible in order to open branches and commence the work.[22]

News of activities appeared quickly from various areas; the Teachers' Training College in Baghdad opened four different night schools with an enrolement of over 700 pupils, and the secondary school in Mosul opened classes for 400 pupils. Similar news came from Basra, Ba'quba, Samawa' 'Amara, Samarra', Nasiriya, 'Ana, Kirkuk, Hilla and many other smaller towns and villages[23]. However, the activities of the society were somewhat reduced as a result of al-Ahali's involvement in the boycott of the Baghdad Light and Power company, Abu al-Timman's retirement from politics, and the suppression of the paper for lengthy periods after 27 December 1933[24]. But

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21. al-Ahali, 27.10.1933.

22. Ibid., 15.11.1933.

23. Ibid., 17.11.1933.

24. al-Ahali was suppressed for 3 months on 27.12.33. It reappeared on 8.2.1934, was suppressed again for 4 months on 12.3.1934 and reappeared on 4.7.1934. Finally it was suppressed for one year on 7.9.1934. It did not reappear until after the 1936 coup d'etat on 3.11.1936.

whenever the paper reappeared it resumed its campaign and began to publish the news of the society's numerous branches which had been set up all over the country. In an editorial on 4 March 1934, al-Ahali demanded that the government of Jamil al-Madfa'i should allocate at least ID 10,000 for the campaign to eradicate illiteracy and to subsidise the society's operations. The article reminded the Minister of Finance (Nasrat al-Farisi) that he was one of the founders of the society and that he was also its vice-president[25].

After the suppression of al-Ahali, Sawt al-Ahali continued the same interest and coverage of the campaign. On 6 July 1934 the first conference of the Society for the Eradication of Illiteracy was attended by the executive committee and representatives of branches of the society from Basra, Nasiriya, Kufa, Hilla and Ba'quba. Abu al-Timman suggested that Nasrat al-Farisi should preside over the conference, which the society agreed. Ibrahim was elected secretary, and the meeting proceeded to evaluate the results of the society's activities. The session continued for two days and ended with resolutions to expand the work of the society[26]. The Baghdad branch reached about 150 members including Yunis al-Sab'awi, Muhammad Salih al-Qazzaz,

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25. al-Ahali, 4.3.1934.

26. Ibid., 7,8.7.1934.

Yusuf al-Gailani, Mahmud Ahmad, and Sadiq al-Bassam, as well as Husain Jamil and 'Ali Haidar Sulaiman[27]. But the activities of the society and the Baghdad branch in particular were overshadowed by other political activities coupled with the various suppressions of the group's newspapers, which prevented the reporting of the society's news.

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27. Interview with Hadid and Ibrahim.

The Boycott of the Baghdad Light and Power Company

The first issue of al-Ahali on 2 January 1932 hinted that the rate of 28 fils per kilowatt for electricity which the Company was charging was very expensive. The article indicated that most Baghdadis were complaining that the rates they were paying were higher than those in other Iraqi and foreign cities. Thus the paper paved the way for a boycott of electricity which was organised by Muhammad Salih al-Qazzaz and his newly formed Majlis Naqabat Ittihad al-'Ummal al-'Ala (The Supreme Council of the Workers' Union), but whose actual organisation and execution was carried on by Jama'at al-Ahali through their papers and the active participation of its members. The paper campaigned against the electric company for three reasons: first, the company was British owned; second, it was indeed charging an exorbitant rate and third, the earlier campaign had met a very strong and positive public response.

Thus on the 3rd November 1933, the Supreme Council of the Workers' Union issued a preparatory declaration (al-Bayan al-Tamhidi) calling for a boycott of the company and urging the people to be prepared for the boycott which was to start on the night of the 5th if the company refused to lower the rates[1]. al-Ahali followed this

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1. al-Ahali, 4.11.1933.

announcement with news of individuals switching off their electric power and replacing it with their own generators or with gas or oil lamps[2]. It also published an article by 'a worker from Baghdad' entitled "The electricity boycott" which was in fact a manual on how the boycott should be conducted, after attacking the foreign company which

> came to Iraq not for the love of the Iraqis but to make money out of them helped and encouraged by the lack of concern on the part of the government. It is therefore the responsibility of the people to teach the company a lesson by applying the methods used successfully by 'our brothers the Syrians'.

The writer considered it

> the duty of every citizen to support the campaign. The first step is to withdraw the deposit from the Electric Co., then to cut off the electric current and use lamps or candles instead, and finally to support the Workers' Union and its decisions.[3]

Before and during the actual boycott, al-Ahali turned to the government's attitude toward the Electric Company, criticising its insistence that the rates of electricity were reasonable, since they were the same as those charged in Berlin. al-Ahali wrote that this statement was received by the population with "shock and astonishment"; in any such conflict the government should at least be neutral, or should be duty bound to support local demands rather than the claims of a foreign

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2. Ibid., 5,8,17.11.1933.

3. Ibid., 3.11.1933.

company. It ridiculed the government's reference to Berlin and asked whether wages there were similar to those in Baghdad. Furthermore, the paper reminded the government that Iraq was the land of oil and that Germany had hardly any, and warned the government not to allow ministers or deputies to hold positions in the Electric Company since they would only use their influence for its benefit. It specifically demanded that the Minister of Economic Affairs Rustum Haidar should stand up to the company.

On 3 December, a banner headline in the paper announced that the boycott of the electric company would begin on the night of 5 December. It also published the declaration of the Supreme Council of the Workers' Union, describing the history of the company and the unsuccessful demands over the previous months for a reduction in the rates. The declaration also pointed out that the company was charging different prices within Baghdad itself, and that prices were lower in areas where British nationals resided.[4] Thus the al-Hinaidi air base was paying 14 fils per kilowatt, al-Shaljiyya 10 fils and the railway area 8 fils, while the other residents of Baghdad were being charged 28 fils[5]. An editorial followed the next day entitled "The population should unite in the boycott of the Electricity Company", urging every citizen to do his part in forcing the company

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4. On 30th November, the paper published the rates of electricity in various cities, Istanbul, Cairo, Beirut, Bombay, Mosul and Hilla, which were all less than 20 fils. al-Ahali 23,25.11.1933.

5. Ibid., 3.12.1933.

to comply with popular demands and to prove to the world that

> We are a nation that resists exploitation despite the government's leniency towards the company. We are determined to make this boycott a lesson for other foreign companies.

While supporting the boycott of a "capitalist company" the article asserted that the only real solution would be the cancellation of the concession and the takeover of the electric supply by the Municipal Authority (Amanat al-'Asima) which would then itself reap the profits, estimated as ID 40,000 in 1933 and ID 50,000 in 1934.

The boycott quickly gathered momentum, spreading to every district including houses, shops, coffee houses, hotels, cinemas, even to the Baghdad Chamber of Commerce and Hizb al-Ikha' al-Watani and some ministers and deputies. They all declared that they had switched off their electricity as they were inspired by the "Venerable Leader of the country Ja'far Abu al-Timman" who was the first to respond to the call, ordering the electric company to switch off the electric current at his house and business and demanding the return of his deposit[6]. The U.S. Legation commented:

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6. Ibid., 9.12.1933. On 3.11.1933 al-Ahali published an article by Muhammad Salih al-Qazzaz in the labour section entitled "The Labour Movement in Iraq and its Objectives", which was a survey of various efforts to establish trade unions since 1924. The General Union of Iraqi Workers was formed out of a merger of the Artisans' and Mechanics' Associations in 1933.

> The boycott has been extended to hotels, restaurants, religious institutions and local clubs. The leaders are inviting the public to boycott electrical energy in the local press ... and by special letters and are threatening the shops which do not respond to their appeal. The Baghdad Power and Light Co. has announced in the local papers that at the present time it is not prepared to reduce its rate.[7]

Some companies and businesses which had their own generators even resorted to putting up notices to the effect that they were generating their own electricity and were not dependent on the company. al-Ahali began to display daily headlines on the progress of the boycott - the boycott enters its twenty-fifth, forty-fifth day, etc., - and when it was banned, Sawt al-Ahali continued the process until the hundred and eleventh day when it too was banned[8].

In spite of this widespread protest, the company refused to accept requests to terminate electricity supply, and would not allow subscribers to withdraw their deposits[9]. After a few days, the government announced that it had reached an agreement with the company under which the rate would be lowered from 28 to 26 fils[10], and warned newspaper editors that any paper discussing the boycott would be banned. al-Ahali immediately protested, challenging the legality of this step and demanding that a written

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7. U.S. Legation to State Department: Review of Events for 1-15 November 1933.

8. Sawt al-Ahali, 26.3.1934.

9. al-Ahali, 10.12.1933.

10. Ibid., 7.12.1933.

warning was the only form of caution which the paper would accept. It considered that the announcement was merely a move to frighten journalists, and bitterly attacked the government for having chosen to support the company against its own people[11].

In the face of these threats, the boycott movement grew in strength, and letters of support appeared regularly in the pages of the newspaper. The Workers' Union also gained more confidence, and became more trenchant in its dealings with the company and the government. After the announcement of the two fils reduction, the Union issued another declaration entitled "The Continuation of the Strike", in which it scornfully rejected such a paltry offer[12].

Although the opposition was directed at the company, it was also, by extension, directed against the government. The British Embassy took the company's part, although the Ambassador himself seems to have had some doubts about both the sense and the equity of the company's position:

> I am assured by those who ought to know that the boycott started as a result of a genuine grievance against the high prices charged by the Company. I can well believe that there is resentment against the Co. and that many of those who are still refusing to use electric light really consider that the reduction in rates that was supposed to come into force from Jan 1st. is not enough. So far as I

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11. Ibid., 8.12.1933.

12. Ibid., 10.12.1933.

> personally am concerned, my light bill has jumped up from £31 in November to no less than £59 for 25 days of December and the members of my staff complain of rises in their bills also.
> Bateman recently wrote to the manager pointing out, more in sorrow than in anger, that there was a chorus of criticism of the Co. which was steadily rising amongst the very people who were the Company's staunchest supporters. Perhaps it would not be amiss to put this side of the question to Max Muller (the Co. manager). He can not be expected to get our goodwill or our support (for what really is a lot of Belgian shareholders) if his Co. are going to rook us at this rate. It is daylight robbery and if I were of a suspicious nature, I might be moved to think that I was being made to make up for the financial losses (they are not a bit heavy in fact) caused by the boycott which I have done my best to break.[13]

Jamil Madfa'i and his government were faced with two alternatives during the boycott. Either they could take on the company and force it to lower its prices, or they could take action against the boycott itself. The first course would have given it widespread popular support, but it would also have played into the hands of the nationalists, particularly the Workers' Union and al-Ahali, and encouraged them to put forward similar demands in the future. It would also have lost them the support of the British Embassy, which might well have resulted in the fall of the government. It was much easier to oppose the boycott and its organisers and teach them a lesson, and at the same time win the Embassy's approval. This failure to side with genuine local interests resulted in the government's complete alienation from the population.

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13. Sir Francis Humphrys to S/S Foreign Affairs: 24.1.1934, FO.371/17860/E1068.

The government began by questioning the legality of the Workers' Union on technical and legal grounds, saying that al-Qazzaz had simply formed it out of the old Artisans' Association without the consent of the Ministry of Interior. The newspaper also received a warning from the government at the same time. On 25 December al-Qazzaz and his associates were tried on charges of disturbing the peace, and exiled to Sulaimaniya for six months. On 27 December the police went to the offices of al-Ahali, arrested the editor 'Abd al-Qadir Isma'il, and banned the paper for a month[14].

Even these measures had no substantial effect on the boycott, which continued unabated until the end of March 1934. The paper reappeared, was banned, reappeared under a different name, and was promptly banned once more[15]. Eventually the government negotiated a further two fils reduction in mid-March, and set up a committee to supervise the company's accounts[16]. Although the boycott could not be said to have achieved its original aims, it had the effect of creating even more support for Jama'at al-Ahali, and conversely, of discrediting the al-Madfa'i government. The episode seems to have been significant in galvanising

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14. al-Ahali 17,27.12.1933; 8.2.1934. Also Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs: 10.1.1934, FO.371/17860/E248.

15. Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs: 10.1.1934, FO.371/17860/E248.

16. al-Ahali 6.2.1934 and Sawt al-Ahali 16.3.1934.

widespread active opposition, and was obviously an important factor in the recruitment of Hikmat Sulaiman to the al-Sha'biya secret society.

Nadi Baghdad (Baghdad Club)

After the initial success of the Society for the Eradication of Illiteracy, Jama'at al-Ahali decided to found a club and cultural centre at the end of 1933 which it hoped would become a focal point of opposition. It would also become a source of recruitment for the group, similar to Nadi al-Nasha', which Ibrahim and friends had established in Beirut during their student years. Ibrahim was particularly enthusiastic about this hoping to be able to spread al-Sha'biya through meetings, lecturers and discussions and to gain new recruits for the al-Sha'biya secret society[17]. Jama'at al-Ahali rented and furnished a house for the club in the outskirts of Baghdad and a general meeting was held on 9 March 1934 to elect an executive committee which included 'Abd al-Fattah Ibrahim, Muhammad Hadid, Yusuf al-Gailani, 'Auni al-Khalidi, Hashim Jawad, Dr Sabih al-Wahbi and Dr Ahmad 'Izzat al-Qaisi. These officers elected Ibrahim president, al-Gailani secretary and al-Khalidi treasurer[18]. Others soon became members of the club, notably Ja'far Abu al-Timman, Naji al-Asil, Yusuf 'Izz al-Din and a number of lawyers, teachers and university graduates[19].

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17. Interview with Ibrahim.

18. al-Ahali 10.3.1934.

19. Interview with Ibrahim.

The club soon became the centre of modern and progressive ideas; lectures, seminars and debates were held on a variety of topics, and classes for foreign languages (English, French, German and Turkish) were also planned[20]. However al-Madfa'i's government was getting impatient with the activities of Jama'at al-Ahali and infiltrated the club with some of its own supporters, who insisted on introducing liquor and gambling, thereby transforming it into a leisure centre and diverting its attention from politics. Ibrahim and the Executive Committee resisted these attempts and the undesirable members were expelled. The latter protested to the Ministry of the Interior which responded by closing the club and confiscating its property[21].

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20. The club advertised for foreign language instructors. Sawt al-Ahali 2.5.1934.

21. According to Ibrahim, they were almost the same elements which disrupted the Iraqi Society in Beirut. However, al-Chadirchi declares (1970, p.32), that Ibrahim was himself largely responsible for the failure of Nadi Baghdad.

al-Sha'biya Secret Society (Jam'iyyat al-Sha'biya al-Sirriya)

From the very beginning Jama'at al-Ahali had toyed with the idea of forming a political party or society[1]. The return of Ibrahim from Basra in the middle of 1932 and the arrival of Kamil al-Chadirchi in early 1933, resulting in the group affirming its identity as an opposition political group with far greater popular support and appeal. This, together with the establishment of al-Ahali newspaper as the leading political daily paper encouraged Jama'at al-Ahali to pursue the various forms of political activity which have just been described. In this way they gained the confidence of well-respected figures such as Ja'far Abu al-Timman, as well as attracting many educated young people who became attached to the group in one way or another. These developments must be seen against the background of the prevailing political situation and the absence of any political party in a real sense.

Thus Jama'at al-Ahali decided to form a society on the principles of al-Sha'biya, as a first and initial step towards forming a political party.

First of all, the group had to decide whether the party should be legal, that is licenced by the government

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1. Interview with the four founders of Jama'at al-Ahali, Ibrahim, Jamil, Isma'il and Hadid.

or secret. It was decided that it should be secret, partly to avoid persecution and partly because many potential members and supporters were civil servants and thus prohibited from taking part in political activities. It was also necessary to decide what kind of people the group should try to recruit. Here al-Chadirchi was instrumental in persuading Jama'at al-Ahali to include 'outstanding personalities' in the secret society rather than only concentrating on the educated young. He suggested Ja'far 'Abu al-Timman, who was already working with Jama'at al-Ahali and who was always admired and revered by all of them[2]. This decision was to be of immense significance in the history of Jama'at al-Ahali since it strengthened the position of Kamil al-Chadirchi within the group and weakened Ibrahim's. Ibrahim also voiced his reservation to recruiting prominent political personalities, especially Hikmat Sulaiman, who was to be instrumental in involving the group in the tribal risings and the 1936 coup d'état.

On 1 November 1933 Abu al-Timman announced his intention to leave politics because of his disillusionment with the Hizb al-Ikha' whose leaders Yasin and Rashid 'Ali had broken the Ta'akhi charter, and with the Hizb al-Watani, who had refused to answer his call for a boycott of the

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2. "In the twenties and thirties few ranked higher in popular esteem than Ja'far Abu -t-Timman. Indeed, to a broad spectrum of Iraqis of varying persuasions, even the communists, he stood, until his death in 1945, as the symbol of irreconcilable opposition to British influence, a man of courage and genuine warmth whom not even politics could corrupt." Batatu (1978),p.294.

elections[3]. al-Ahali published an editorial entitled "An Ominous Event; Abu al-Timman is leaving politics", which praised Abu al-Timman and his long history of service to his country. It attributed his resignation to the deterioration of the political parties and of the political situation in general. The paper considered this an encouraging sign for the start of a new era of real struggle[4]. For a period of two months until its closure on 27 December 1933, al-Ahali published letters from all over the country supporting Abu al-Timman, urging him to return to his patriotic activities.

In two separate articles addressed to the "Great leader of the country, Ja'far Abu al-Timman" in March 1934, Sawt al-Ahali urged him to return to the political arena to work with "sincere and patriotic young men who know how best to benefit the country and to combat the vested interests of politicians"[5]. These calls were probably meant to test Abu al-Timman's reactions to the possibility of working with Jama'at al-Ahali, as well as bringing the attention of his supporters and other disappointed nationalists to the fact that a group with a new approach to Iraqi politics was now in existence. The climate in Baghdad was also encouraging for Ja'far Abu

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3. al-Ahali, 2.11.1933; also Kubba M. (Muthakkarati fi Samim al-Ahdath) (My memoirs at the Heart of Events), Beirut 1969, p.52.

4. al-Ahali, 3.11.1933.

5. Sawt al-Ahali, 14,15,23,26.3.1934.

al-Timman to return to his usual political activity, for since the death of King Faisal the political system had become less stable. al-Madfa'i had not proved a brilliant or strong administrator and the other political factions were clamouring for power, undermining his position still further.

Thus Jama'at al-Ahali which was now composed of Ibrahim, Hadid, Isma'il and al-Chadirchi approached Abu al-Timman and revealed to him the evidence of the secret society and the principles of al-Sha'biya. According to al-Chadirchi, Abu al-Timman

> studied each point carefully ... and declared that he accepted these principles initially. However, he emphasised that he was a true Muslim and that his religion did not contradict with the principles of democracy and socialism. ... Abu al-Timman accepted al-Sha'biya firmly and with understanding, which we had hoped.[6]

This did not surprise Isma'il, who knew Abu al-Timman well, "a man with an open mind and heart"[7]. This development caused further changes in the direction and style of the group. Abu al-Timman had no equal within the group, and was more like a father figure than a member of a secret society and although they continued to discuss and debate all important issues collectively, the last word was left for Abu al-Timman, and if he did not agree, Jama'at al-Ahali would not vote for it. Ibrahim now feels

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6. al-Chadirchi (1970), pp.29-30.

7. Interview with Isma'il.

that the ideological basis of the group was being compromised in order to gain wider popularity and acceptance. He realised that this was a two-edged sword but the euphoria of Abu al-Timman's arrival temporarily dispelled all his doubts.

> It was an important turning point in the life of al-Ahali. Abu al-Timman was the most admired national leader, and a figure with great popular influence. When people knew he had joined us, they contacted us and wanted to join as well. We became very popular.[8]

As a result, Jama'at al-Ahali increased their activities, as a political group through their auxiliary organisations, the Illiteracy Society and Nadi Baghdad, although al-Ahali and Sawt al-Ahali were suppressed five times during 1933 and 1934 and only published for six months out of a possible two years. As well as attacking the government and its policies and practices, the papers began to call on the people, particularly the young, to organise themselves in popular movements with well-defined programmes which would deal with the ills of society and improve the conditions of all the population[9]. They also felt sufficiently confident to begin explaining the ideology of al-Sha'biya in the newspapers in late 1934 and 1935[10], calling for wide support for the new ideology, which was apparently finding acceptance all over the country.

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8. Interview with Ibrahim.

9. al-Ahali 2,9,10,11.3.1934. Sawt al-Ahali 17.5.1934.

10. al-Ahali 8.7.1934; 25.8.1934; Sawt al-Ahali 18,19.4.1935.

Significantly another of its papers al-Mabda'[11] published an article on 10 March 1935 which criticised the government for using force against the rebellious Mid-Euphrates tribes. It called on the army to support the popular and patriotic movements, since it had gained the respect and admiration of the people for its dealing with the Assyrians. The paper urged the Army to preserve this respect and trust by supporting the popular movements[12].

The recruitment of Hikmat Sulaiman

Abu al-Timman soon became the focal point of the society, and the committee began to meet regularly at his house to discuss the political situation, the society's activities and its future projects. The question of the quality of members and leaders of the society was brought up again. al-Chadirchi, who was always anxious to recruit prominent political personalities, was now supported by Abu al-Timman, who was sensitive to the fact that he was surrounded by men much younger and less experienced than himself. The decision to recruit practising politicians rather than dedicated young people from the Illiteracy Society and Nadi Baghdad was another compromise at the expense of the ideology of al-Sha'biya and another means through which al-Chadirchi could assert his claims to the leadership of the group. In this he was opposed by

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11. al-Mabda' was owned by Ja'far Abu al-Timman and managed by Hasan al-Talibani; nevertheless 'Abd al-Qadir Isma'il remained effective in running the paper.

12. al-Mabda' 10.3.1935.

Ibrahim, whose influence had begun to diminish and whose position within the group had begun to be seriously contested ever since al-Chadirchi's arrival. This development represented another step away from the original leftist path and towards the more conventional practices of Iraqi politics.

After the decision to include prominent personalities had been taken, the second step was to suggest possible candidates. Two names were brought up, Nasrat al-Farisi and Hikmat Sulaiman. The former had worked with al-Ahali as Vice-President of the Society for the Eradication of Illiteracy and continued to be on good terms with the group. However, they had found him generally lukewarm and ineffectual. Hence al-Chadirchi suggested approaching Hikmat Sulaiman, with whom he had served on the Executive Committee of Hizb al-Ikha'. Hikmat too had fallen out with the Ikha' leadership and was then out of politics. Hikmat Sulaiman of course had been Minister of Interior at the time of the Assyrian incident, which had gained him popularity for his supposedly uncompromising position towards the Assyrians and the British. During the conflict al-Ahali newspaper praised his position towards the Assyrians and his support of the Army. Abu al-Timman knew Hikmat well and was prepared to work with him. But, for Ibrahim, Hadid and Isma'il, although the prospect of working with someone of Hikmat Sulaiman's stature naturally

seemed extremely attractive[13] they realised that it would inevitably involve a certain degree of compromise. It was agreed that al-Chadirchi should approach him to see whether he would join the society, and after a few meetings Hikmat agreed to do so, expressing his eagerness to work with Ja'far Abu al-Timman. The group insisted that he should not inform Yasin and Rashid 'Ali about its activities. On the face of it, it seemed unlikely that Hikmat would be able to sever relations with his political past and embrace the new ideology, but he pledged to do so.

Hence by mid-1934, Hikmat had become a member of the central committee. Ja'far was president, 'Abd al-Fattah Ibrahim secretary and Muhammad Hadid treasurer. The committee established an oath or pledge[14] which had to be taken by every initiated member. The pledge was in two different forms, one for Central Committee members, and the second for regular members. The Central Committee assigned different members to different areas of recruitment; these areas were first, educated young people, especially members of the Illiteracy Society and the Baghdad club, students at various institutions of higher education and younger government employees. This area was assigned to al-Chadirchi Ibrahim and Hadid. Ja'far Abu al-Timman was responsible for contacting former members of al-Hizb al-Watani

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13. Hikmat Sulaiman was born in 1885, and was thus four years younger than Ja'far Abu al-Timman.

14. This is similar to the Fabian Society's practice - see above p.114.

and other nationalists, while military officers were the responsibility of Hikmat, who was to form an organisation within the armed forces. Hikmat was in close contact with General Bakr Sidqi, with whom he had established a strong friendship ever since the Assyrian conflict[15]. Although the names of the army officers were to remain secret even to the other Central Committee members, Sulaiman later informed them that Sidqi had established contacts with some Army and Air Force officers including Baha' al-Din Nuri, Shakir al-Wadi and Muhammad 'Ali Jawad. In a short time, the Society succeeded in recruiting many of the ablest young including Muhammad Salih al-Qazzaz, Sadiq Kammuna, Hasan al-Talibani, 'Abdullah Salim (former head of the Ba'quba branch of al-Hizb al-Watani), Yusuf 'Izz al-Dinn Ibrahim (a friend of al-Chadirchi who became Minister of Education in the Coup Government), Nadhim al-Zahawi and Hashim Jawad. According to Hadid, the Society had between forty and fifty members in 1934-35 who met regularly and paid monthly dues as well as taking part in the other activities of the group.

The Activities of Jama'at al-Ahali 1934-1935

During the al-Madfa'i and 'Ali Jawdat governments between November 1933 and March 1935, Jama'at al-Ahali and their secret society published four separate newspapers.

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15. al-Chadirchi (1970) p.32; also interview with Isma'il, Hadid and Ibrahim.

The first was al-Ahali with 'Abd al-Qadir Isma'il and 'Aziz Sharif alternating as its owners, which was followed by Sawt al-Ahali under Kamil al-Chadirchi, which appeared between 14 March and 21 May 1934, and from 18 April 1935 until 10 May 1935. One further issue appeared on 12 August 1936, and the paper then disappeared until 23 September 1942. The third paper, al-Mabda', was published under the ownership of Ja'far Abu al-Timman and Hasan al-Talibani, from 26 January 1935 until 11 March 1935. Finally there was al-Bayan owned by Hikmat Sulaiman which appeared on 12 March 1935 for a single issue. Another issue published on 7 April 1936 was confiscated and suppressed by al-Hashimi's government.

From this brief survey of the group's newspapers it is possible to gauge the extent of the sanctions applied against them by the two governments. At the same time it is clear that the group were determined to follow an approach of total opposition to successive cabinets and to the political system as a whole. Thus the governments' retaliation was not limited to suppression of one or two issues or for a short period, but of continuous suppression. This was very costly to Jama'at al-Ahali in terms of political support as well as financially, since the press was left idle. On 12 March 1934, al-Ahali was suspended for an article entitled "Ja'far and Lawrence" which criticised Ja'far al-'Askari for praising Lawrence of Arabia and accused Lawrence of having worked for British Intelligence[16]

16. al-Ahali 12.3.1934.

It was suppressed again on 8 September 1934 when 'Abd al-Qadir Isma'il and Kamil al-Chadirchi were arrested on a charge of circulating letters (manshurs) attacking King Ghazi[17]. al-Chadirchi was released after four days, but Isma'il had to stand trial and was sentenced to a year's imprisonment although he appealed and was acquitted[18].

The real motive for the lengthy suppression of al-Ahali and Sawt al-Ahali was their total opposition to the Iraqi political system and British influence in the country, as is illustrated in the following report from the British Embassy:

> On the whole the attitude of the Arabic press towards British policy in Iraq has been restrained. The one serious offender was the Ahali. In March His Majesty's Ambassador had to protest strongly against the publication of articles concerning the appointment of a British vice-consul at Diana and the administration of the Port of Basra, which were couched in abusive terms with pointed references to His Majesty's Government. As a result the Ahali was suspended for ten days. It reappeared, however, immediately as Saut-al-Ahali, under the same editorship, and continued its policy of scurrilous articles on the work of the British officials in Iraq. In April His Majesty's Ambassador again protested to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, and for a while there was an improvement in the tone of this newspaper. The improvement did not, however, continue for long, and on the 23rd May, following further representations, it was suspended for one year. A short while later it was again revived as the Ahali and, in September, His Majesty's Chargé d'Affaires had again to draw the attention of the

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17. Knabenshue to State Department:19.9.1934, USNA 890G.9/8/10.

18. Knabenshue to State Department:19.9.1934, USNA Ghazi/18, also 22.11.1934, USNA Ghazi/19. Isma'il admitted that he had written the manshur against King Ghazi which, with the help of his friends, was distributed all over Baghdad. (Interview with Isma'il).

> Iraqi Government to offensive criticism of British policy. The Government this time took energetic action and the Ahali was suspended for a year.[19]

Isma'il believes that the series of articles he wrote after his visit to the marshes was the reason for the annoyance of the government and the British Embassy and his subsequent arrest and trial. Apparently the Embassy sent an Indian employee to offer him a large sum of money for the articles in an effort to prevent him from publishing them, but he continued to publish them until the last issue of al-Ahali on 8 September 1934 when he was arrested. The series, which started on 4 July, ran to 49 articles entitled "The tragedy of 'Amara Liwa; 15 days among the Ma'dan of the marshes and the rice fields"[20]. Isma'il described in detail and in his usual emotional style, life in the marshes for various classes and individuals, such as the shaikhs, the sarkals, the men of religion, the fallahin, the women, the government officials and the British officials. He explained the injustices and the suffering inflicted on the fallahin and their families, their customs and traditions, and the primitive health and education centres. Isma'il ended his description of the suffering of the rice planters by saying "Every Iraqi when he eats his rice should know that it is mixed with the blood of these wretched slaves".

Besides attacking the Iraq and British governments during this period, al-Ahali and Sawt al-Ahali continued

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19. Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs:1.2.1935, FO.371/18951/E940.

20. al-Ahali, 4.7.1934 to 8.9.1934.

to discuss general economic and social issues. They called on the government to establish industrial and agricultural projects, to activate the economy, to reduce dependence on foreign trade and foreign companies and to abolish monopolies. It called for the expansion and improvement of health and educational centres and the creation of more employment[21]. Sawt al-Ahali followed the same line, calling for the creation of much needed public projects, such as irrigation works and oil refineries and for the improvement of the conditions of workers and peasants. News of progress in Turkey was given a great deal of coverage and compared with the lack of progress in Iraq. This may have been to please Hikmat Sulaiman who was greatly impressed with developments in Turkey[22].

In 1935, Ja'far Abu al-Timman published al-Mabda', which had some changes in the format but was in the same stype of al-Ahali's previous papers. al-Mabda' continued to attack the government of 'Ali Jawdat, accusing it of openly serving Britain instead of Iraq[23]. When al-Mabda' was banned, Hikmat Sulaiman published al-Bayan, whose editorial was written by Ja'far Abu al-Timman, entitled "Who is the danger to the safety of the state?". Abu al-Timman criticised the government's policies and practice in general and for closing his newspaper in

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21. e.g. al-Ahali, Feb. March, July, Aug. and Sep.1934.

22. Sawt al-Ahali, 14.3.1934 to 21.5.1934 and 18.4.1935 to 10.5.1935. Kamil al-Chadirchi himself looked to Turkey with favour but the increased and generally favourable coverage of Turkey was probably aimed at satisfying Hikmat Sulaiman.

23. al-Mabda', 11.3.1935

particular, and called on the Iraqi people to stand together against the government[24]. During this period, Jama'at al-Ahali was involved with Rashid 'Ali and other politicians in instigating the Mid-Euphrates tribal leaders to revolt against 'Ali Jawdat's government. They finally succeeded in forcing it to resign and it was replaced by a government headed by Yasin and Rashid 'Ali.

The Attempt to Form a Political Party

When Hikmat Sulaiman returned from his holiday in Istanbul in the autumn of 1935, he appeared more determined than ever to oppose al-Hashimi's government. Jama'at al-Ahali's political activities had declined and their spirit was broken and the al-Sha'biya secret society, the Baghdad club and the Illiteracy Society activities had come to a virtual standstill, because of Yasin's more vigorous attacks and Hikmat's original reluctance to oppose his former colleagues[25]. In general, the new government seemed more confident and in firm control of the political situation. Even the Nuri-Yasin alliance which had not been expected to last seemed to be working well. In contrast, Jama'at a-Ahali or more precisely the

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24. al-Bayan 12.3.1935.

25. Hikmat Sulaiman was offered the post of Minister of Finance by Yasin al-Hashimi in March 1935, which he declined at the instigation of the Executive Committee of the al-Sha'biya secret society. He and the society were prepared to accept the post of Minister of Interior, but this was given to Rashid 'Ali al-Gailani. Yasin was well aware of Hikmat's connection with Jama'at al-Ahali.

members of the al-Sha'biya society began to break away, even members of the Central Committee. Hikmat was hesitant, unstable and still maintaining contacts with Rashid and Yasin. As a result of criticisms of his third Tract (al-Sha'biya Vol.II), Ibrahim began to complain and to express his dissatisfaction with the situation in the society. More significantly he was feeling the pressure of Kamil al-Chadirchi and his manoeuvres to diminish his own position within the group. Isma'il was being drawn further to the left and away from the society altogether while Hadid remained passive.

The only immediately obvious way out of this impasse was to form a legal political party, a suggestion which gained the approval of most of the members of the Central Committee. In the discussions which followed three distinct and conflicting ideas emerged. One tendency was represented by al-Chadirchi, Ibrahim, Hadid and Isma'il, who believed that the Central Committee should only include educated persons who firmly believed in the principles and ideology of al-Sha'biya. Hikmat Sulaiman however wanted to include some tribal leaders, whom he considered would strengthen the party and widen its base, although in fact this would serve only to strengthen his own position. Finally, Abu al-Timman's position had become somewhat awkward. On the one hand he supported the first group while not wishing to be in a party of mainly young people with radical leanings, and on the other he was always careful not to offend Hikmat Sulaiman, whose defection to Yasin's camp never

seemed too remote a possibility. Thus a special meeting was held to discuss the issue further. Here Ja'far for the first time in his political life, seemed to be setting contradictory and unrealistic rules for his colleagues, although Hikmat's influence seems to have been crucial. He demanded that members of the future party's central committee should have the following qualifications: they should believe in the principles of al-Sha'biya; they should not be drawn from the ranks of the traditional politicians; they should not be from the working class like Muhammad Salih al-Qazzaz; they should not hold extreme socialist beliefs like 'Abd al-Qadir Isma'il and finally they should not be too young. Here Abu al-Timman agreed to include Hadid and exclude Ibrahim, although Hadid was younger, presumably because Hadid came from a better known family. The idea of excluding Ibrahim and Isma'il from a party to be based on the ideology which they had helped to formulate must have come as a shattering blow for both of them, particularly as it came from Abu al-Timman, a man they admired and revered, who knew them well and appreciated their sincerity and ability[26]. On such conditions no agreement was possible

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26. Ibrahim alleges that al-Chadirchi was behind the idea of excluding him from the Committee, but Isma'il thinks that he was in any case drifting away from the group which was now obviously dominated by Abu al-Timman, Sulaiman and al-Chadirchi.

and the idea of forming a political party was postponed. Meanwhile Jama'at al-Ahali devoted most of its energies to the developments in the Iraqi political arena, especially in intrigues with tribal leaders and subsequently with the army in what was to culminate in the October 1936 coup d'état.

Chapter X

al-Ahali's Involvement in Iraqi Politics (1935 - 1942)[1]

The period between 1935 and 1942 witnessed a drastic change in the practices and structure of Jama'at al-Ahali. During these years the group moved away from its former generally ideological orientation and towards closer involvement in practical politics, which necessitated a series of intrigues and temporary alliances. This change of direction can be traced to the recruitment of the three prominent political personalities, namely Kamil al-Chadirchi, Ja'far Abu al-Timman and Hikmat Sulaiman which has just been described. The latter in particular was instrumental in involving the group with other politicians in the instigation of tribal uprisings in 1934 and 1935 and in the 1936 coup d'état. These changes resulted in the departure of 'Abd al-Fattah Ibrahim and in the weakening of the group's radical wing.

After the success of the coup, Jama'at al-Ahali were given the majority of the ministerial seats in the new cabinet, and thus attempted to implement their programme based on al-Sha'biya, forming a political party to achieve their aims. The Reformists, as they became known, began to meet stiff resistance from Bakr Sidqi and his clique of army officers after the coup, as well as from other entrenched political groups which opposed them for a variety of reasons but mainly because of their reform programme. The combination of these forces proved a serious

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1. This Chapter is substantially based on interviews with the founders and on the memoirs of Kamil al-Chadirchi .

impediment to Jama'at al-Ahali. The group's uneasy alliance with Hikmat Sulaiman and Bakr Sidqi soon faltered, for as soon as the Prime Minister and the army chief felt secure in power, they turned against Jama'at al-Ahali and its programme of reform, which made the movement and its ideology look like an empty shell. They were unable to achieve even a small part of their programme and in sheer frustration and acknowledgement of their failure, the reformist ministers eventually tendered their resignation.

During 1935 and 1936, with Yasin al-Hashimi's accession to power, the various activities of Jama'at al-Ahali fell victim to the government's heavy hand. The group was watched closely by the secret police which severely limited the activities of the al-Sha'biya secret society. Furthermore, the newspapers were regularly suppressed for long periods.

Sawt al-Ahali was reopened for a brief period, from 18 April to 10 May 1935. In its last issue it criticised the al-Hashimi government's handling of the Rumaitha uprising and the use of force instead of making attempts to solve the acute problems of the region. In 1936 only one issue of Sawt al-Ahali and al-Bayan appeared as they were suppressed immediately and not a single issue of al-Ahali or al-Mabda' was allowed to be published. Thus in the period immediately before the coup, Jama'at al-Ahali was left with no means of opposition except to present the

King with protests against the government and were almost forced into co-operating with the army in preparing the coup d'état.

The Departure of 'Abd al-Fattah Ibrahim

Abd al-Fattah Ibrahim's role and contribution to Jama'at al-Ahali can not be minimised. His position among the founders was paramount, as they themselves have testified. Ibrahim was responsible for the elaboration of the principles of al-Sha'biya and its literature and also nurtured the movement from early days. He was instrumental in widening the horizons of the founders themselves and was particularly influential in maintaining the high standard of al-Ahali and the other newspapers.

Thus Ibrahim had the commanding respect of the other founders and the undisputed leadership of the group. The challenge to his position was in part of his own making, in that he allowed Kamil al-Chadirchi to join the group, which brought him much distress, eventually forcing him to abandon the movement he had created. The conflict between Ibrahim and al-Chadirchi was almost inevitable, given the differences in background, personality, experiences and aspirations. Because of Ibrahim's special position and the significant contribution he had made to Jama'at al-Ahali it was hardly possible for al-Chadirchi to force him to leave the moment he himself joined the group. In fact, the process was to take three years, although the basic conflict became clear relatively early on. When al-Chadirchi joined in mid-1933 the vital question was whether

it should remain ideologically pure, or whether it should attract powerful supporters from the ranks of the more high-minded conventional politicians. al-Chadirchi successfully encouraged the group to recruit Ja'far Abu al-Timman against Ibrahim's better judgement, thus strengthening his own position.

Ibrahim attributes the conflict to the threat that he posed to al-Chadirchi's ambitions, while al-Chadirchi blamed Ibrahim for the failure of Nadi Baghdad in 1934, and more significantly for al-Ahali's third tract, which managed to offend both the Arab nationalists and the Communists, who wrote a rebuttal entitled al-Sha'biya fi'l-Mizan (al-Sha'biya in the Balance). al-Chadirchi claims that he intervened successfully to prevent the Communists from publishing the book, while Ibrahim alleges that al-Chadirchi had instigated the authors to write it in the first place.

This incident brought Ibrahim onto the defensive, and he pushed the conflict into the open. Thus he began to be much more uncompromising on the principles of al-Sha'biya in what seems to have been an attempt to demonstrate that his differences with al-Chadirchi were a result of his firm attachment to the group's principles, and to show that his opponent had neither ideology nor principles. In the process, Ibrahim criticised Isma'il for his Communist leanings and embarrassed him by demanding that he should choose between the Communist party or Jama'at al-Ahali. This annoyed Isma'il, particularly as

the confrontation took place in the presence of Ja'far Abu al-Timman, whom he greatly admired. al-Chadirchi took advantage of this incident to win Isma'il to his side and thus Ibrahim was left with no support on the Central Committee. Although Ibrahim and Hadid never had any major disagreements and Hadid was always passive and never took sides, he was in fact closer to al-Chadirchi than to Ibrahim.

During January and February 1935, according to the police files[2] there were a number of meetings between the leaders of Jama'at al-Ahali (Abu al-Timman, Sulaiman, al-Chadirchi and Isma'il) and Rashid 'Ali al-Gailani, Nasrat al-Farisi, Sadiq al-Bassam, Yunis al-Sab'awi, 'Ali Mahmud, and 'Abd al-Razzaq Shibib, who also met with some shaikhs from Diwaniya in order to co-ordinate their efforts against the government. This shows the extent of the group's early involvement in intrigues with traditional politicians such as Rashid 'Ali and Mid-Euphrates tribal leaders such as Muhsin Abu Tabikh and 'Alwan al-Yasiri. 'Abd al-Fattah Ibrahim objected strongly to these tactics as he felt that they were against the principles and the spirit of al-Sha'biya. He was uneasy at the movement being involved in such activities in partnership with reactionary tribal shaikhs and corrupt politicians, the more so as

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2. al-Jarida al-Siyasiya (The political journal), paragraph 162 of 24.1.1935 and paragraph 290 of 9.2.1935 GSO.

Hikmat Sulaiman had even suggested that the group should invite some tribal leaders to join the society[3].

Some time in the middle of 1936, Hadid relayed a message from Abu al-Timman urging Ibrahim to attend an important meeting of the society's Central Committee. He duly went to al-Chadirchi's house and was told that the Central Committee meeting was to witness Bakr Sidqi taking al-Sha'biya society's pledge or oath. Sidqi did not take the pledge and left the meeting without saying a word to which Ibrahim reacted very strongly,[4] criticising the group's involvement with the army in a potentially dangerous adventure, which would be damaging to the society and its principles even if the coup succeeded. Ibrahim warned them that they would pay for their mistake. This was the last time that Ibrahim attended a society meeting, which al-Chadirchi also misunderstood, claiming that he feared that Ibrahim might reveal their conspiracy to Yasin, which was of course untrue and unfounded.[5]

After the coup Abu al-Timman, Hikmat Sulaiman, and 'Abd al-Qadir Isma'il visited Ibrahim at home and offered him a good position in the new government, which he refused, preferring to remain a secondary school teacher.

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3. al-'Umari, K., (1970), p.62.

4. al-Chadirchi (1970), pp.38-9.

5. It was alleged that Ibrahim had established a secret contact with Yasin through his wife and Yasin's daughter who were teachers at the same school.

al-Chadirchi did not attempt a reconciliation with Ibrahim, and even though al-Chadirchi became a Minister, Ibrahim did not hesitate to write a letter to Abu al-Timman in which he explained al-Chadirchi's motives in forcing him out of the movement, accusing him of betraying the principles of al-Ahali, and of falsely spreading rumours against him and his family[6].

The Coup of 1936

The role of Jama'at al-Ahali in the preparation and execution of the 1936 coup has already been described in Chapter VI.In this section we shall concentrate on the group's role in the new government, and particularly on the developments which led up to the resignation of the reformist ministers from the Cabinet in June 1937.

On 3 November, a few days after the coup, al-Ahali newspaper reappeared. This issue was entirely devoted to news of the coup and of the mass demonstrations which had been organised by al-Ahali and other progressive elements. In these first numbers the paper insisted on calling the men of the previous regime to account, and praised the coup and the new government. Jama'at al-Ahali's secret society, al-Sha'biya, was legalised under the name of Jam'iyyat al-Islah al-Sha'bi, (Popular Reform League),

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6. See Appendix H.
(letter of Ibrahim to Ja'far).

and al-Ahali newspaper became the League's official organ. Editorials were given over to the League's programme, and discussed topics such as foreign policy, raising living standards, the redistribution of wealth, the establishment of banks, increasing the salaries of junior civil servants, strengthening the armed forces and a host of other such topics[7].

It was natural that the paper and its staff should regard the coup as a triumph for the group's principles, although their illusions were soon to be shattered. In the first place, the unequal nature of their alliance with the army, coupled with Hikmat's early 'defection' to Bakr Sidqi gravely weakened the position of the group within the government as a whole. Secondly, the former regime soon recovered from the shock of the coup[8], and the traditional politicians set about rearranging their alliances with other groups opposed to Jama'at al-Ahali. Finally, the group lacked experience of the day to day administration of government, and senior civil servants and the British advisers were not overly co-operative or sympathetic[9].

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7. See al-Ahali 3.11.1936 - 26.1.1937.

8. The coup itself only occasioned one fatal casualty, the shooting of Ja'far al-'Askari, which was entirely unpremeditated. Yasin al-Hashimi, Nuri al-Sa'id and Rashid 'Ali fled the country: Yasin died in Beirut in January 1937, and the others returned after Sidqi's assassination and the fall of Hikmat's government in August 1937. Their supporters remained in their positions within the armed forces and the civil service, which gave rise to constant intrigues.

9. Although C.J.Edmonds and Sir Archibald Clark Kerr seem to have had a cordial relationship with Hikmat Sulaiman.

On 16 November, the Popular Reform League was officially licenced by the government. al-Chadirchi, who was Minister of Economics and Communications, was elected secretary, Sadiq Kammuna deputy secretary, and Muhammad Salih al-Qazzaz treasurer. The League published its programme, with application forms for membership attached. Progressive and leftist elements soon attached themselves to the League[10], thus earning it a good deal of adverse publicity which was eagerly exploited by its opponents. In November the British Embassy reported that al-Chadirchi was 'called a Communist by his Arab friends' and described 'Abd al-Qadir Isma'il as 'a man who, in the past, has shown leanings towards Communism'. Discussing the League's programme, Clark Kerr reported:

> You will see that there is a noticeably Red tinge about many of its items, and that it adds considerably to the discord of incompatible ideals which seem to inspire the members of the new Government. Speculation about the future becomes, therefore, all the more difficult.[11]

This particular brand of criticism was not without effect even among the leaders and supporters of the League. Ja'far Abu al-Timman and 'Abd al-Latif Nuri (who was Minister of Defence) did not join until 25 December. Furthermore, Hikmat also remained aloof, and in fact never joined, which clearly made for considerable difficulties:

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10. For the programme, see Appendix J.

11. Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs: 2.11.1936, FO.371/20014/E7181; 25.11.1936, FO.371/20014/E7351; and 13.1.1937, FO.371/20795/E660.

> Although the Popular Reform League has been created to support the Government, the Government have not pledged themselves to adopt the full programme of the League ...
> Until they do so the programme may only be regarded as a list of visionary hopes designed presumably to win popular support.[12]

As well as causing obvious problems for the leadership, such rebuffs also resulted in the public being discouraged from joining the League. Hikmat's attitude was clearly due to pressure from Bakr Sidqi, although it seems likely that he had never had a particularly sincere commitment to the ideology of al-Ahali in any case. When pressed to join formally in January 1937, he suggested that the League 'should be absorbed into a political party with a less radical creed..It could then become the official party of the present government'[13]. This suggestion was in fact accepted by the League on 9 January, but it emerged during the discussions that senior members refused to be associated with any party that would be dominated by Bakr Sidqi or his agents[14]. The failure of the League signified the end of attempts to create a mass base for the ideology of Jama'at al-Ahali, and the victory of more conservative forces within the government. Eventually,

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12. Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs: 25.11.1936, FO.371/20014/E7351.

13. Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs: 13.1.1937, FO.371/20795/E660.

14. Ibid.

Bakr Sidqi began a campaign of violence against members of the League, and in July 1937 it was formally suppressed by the government for 'disseminating destructive ideas, evil intentions, and Communism'[15].

By early 1937, therefore, events had combined to make the inner circle of Jama'at al-Ahali both critical and apprehensive of the activities of Hikmat and Bakr Sidqi, and of the government's failure to take more drastic measures against the enemies of reform or to stick to the democratic principles which it had proclaimed. Bakr Sidqi gave further demonstrations of his ruthlessness and dictatorial tendencies in the assassination of Dhia Yunis on 20 January and the attempt on the life of Maulud Mukhlis on 9 February[16]. More directly relevant to the fortunes of Jama'at al-Ahali however was his conduct during the campaign leading up to the election to the Chamber of Deputies on 20 February.

On 21 January, al-Ahali newspaper called on the government to ensure that the forthcoming elections should be democratic, genuinely representative, and free from interference. It also suggested that candidates should prepare election manifestoes. However, even these seemingly moderate demands caused Bakr Sidqi to threaten to prevent the election of any 'reformist' to the

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15. Knabenshue to State Department: 22.7.1937, USNA 890G.00/424.

16. Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs: Annual Report of 1937; FO.371/21856/E794 also 14.2.1937, FO.371/20795/E1235.

Chamber[17]. In fact,he and Hikmat resorted to the traditional methods of election, and distributed the seats among the various political factions. After negotiations with Ja'far Abu al-Timman, Bakr was eventually persuaded to allocate 12 of the 114 seats to the reformists. Bakr himself put up 30 nominees, while the rest were given to Hikmat to distribute mainly to tribal shaikhs[18].

In such circumstances it was hardly surprising that the Chamber became the scene of a number of battles between the reformists and their opponents. Since they were in a minority it rapidly became apparent that the reformists would be unable to pass any of their legislation. All attempts to enact measures of social and economic reform[19] were greeted with accusations of Communism[20]. Hikmat Sulaiman, who always sided with the majority faction, fervently denied that his government had any such tendencies:

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17. Interviews with Hadid and Isma'il, who were both elected Deputies. Other reformist deputies included 'Aziz Sharif, Sadiq Kammuna; Ja'far Abu al-Timman who was a Senator. In addition Husain Jamil was appointed Director of Government Propaganda.

18. Interview with Jamil, Isma'il and Hadid. See also Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs: Annual Report of 1937, FO.371/21856/E794.

19. al-Chadirchi submitted a 30-page report to the Cabinet, advocating closer control over the oil company by the government, and that the government should acquire rights to those areas not included in the company's concessions. Many of these points were to be included in Law 80 of 1959. See Appendix I.

20. Attempts to introduce more equitable labour and agrarian legislation were countered by proposals to erect a statue of Bakr Sidqi.See the Proceedings of the Chamber of Deputies,1937.

> On March 25, the Prime Minister stated in the Chamber of Deputies that Iraq is, and will remain, a democratic state and that there is no place in an Islamic country for any other form of government.[21]

Bakr Sidqi himself was moved to make a similar declaration in an interview with al-Bilad newspaper: he

> alleged that the rumours of communism in the Government of Iraq are circulated by the government's enemies abroad and that they are without foundation. He stated that Iraq had not reached a point of capitalistic development sufficient to make a suitable place for communism; that, furthermore, communism is not compatible with the monarchial principle and that so long as he remains Chief of Staff, his army will defend the throne of King Ghazi.[22]

In this atmosphere it is not surprising that al-Chadirchi was seriously considering resignation from the government[23], and over the next months he and his reformist colleagues became more and more isolated. In April 1937 Mahdi al-Jawahiri, a supporter of Jama'at al-Ahali and one of Iraq's leading poets, was arrested for publishing a critical article by Muhammad Salih al-Qazzaz in his newspaper al-Inqilab. Both men were sentenced to terms of imprisonment amid protests from the reformist

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21. In a newspaper interview, Ja'far declared that he was "entirely opposed to communism. He indicated that his inclination to assist oppressed people people and the labouring classes had given rise to the charge that he favoured communism, but he pointed out that as a businessman, financier, and large land owner, communism would not be in his own interests." Knabenshue to State Department: 30.3.1937, USNA 890G.00/404.

22. Ibid.

23. al-Chadirchi (1970),p.46.

groups in the Chamber and from al-Ahali newspaper[24].

In May, al-Chadirchi and some of the reformist deputies who were considering resignation, consulted with Abu al-Timman, who counselled patience, saying that the group would be more effective if it remained inside the government. In spite of this, al-Chadirchi did in fact submit his resignation, but the Cabinet did not accept it, although Hikmat told Clark Kerr that he was considering replacing him with Muhammad Hadid[25]. By June, even Ja'far had come to the conclusion that he could no longer remain at his post, and was looking for an excuse to make a dramatic exit. This presented itself in the middle of the month, when the government sanctioned an attack on some recalcitrant tribes in the Samawa area, in the course of which a number of villages were destroyed by bombing. Subsequently the police inflicted heavy casualties on the tribal forces and ugly stories of the shooting of tribal hostages soon reached the capital[26].

As a result, Ja'far and Kamil al-Chadirchi persuaded their colleagues Yusuf 'Izz al-Din, the Minister of Education and Salih Jabr, the Minister of Justice, a former supporter of Yasin al-Hashimi, to join them in submitting their collective resignation on 19 June, stating that they

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24. al-Ahali 30.4. to 7.5.1937.

25. Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs: 12.6.1937, FO.371/20795/E3699.

26. Ambassador (Baghdad) to S/S Foreign Affairs: Annual Report of 1937, FO.371/21856/E794.

wished to disassociate themselves from the Samawa operation[27]. The timing of the resignations was particularly embarrassing for the government, since it coincided with the arrival of a delegation from Turkey. Hikmat was apparently particularly sorry to lose Ja'far, whom he had always admired, and made several attempts to change his mind. Bakr also pleaded with Ja'far, but the latter refused to respond, saying: "I refuse to carry the drum while you are the drummer"[28]. The resignations were accepted, and the vacant ministries were filled by anti-reformists on 24 June. On 24 July, al-Ahali newspaper was banned for an indefinite period, and in August Hikmat's government issued a decree depriving both 'Abd al-Qadir and Yusuf Isma'il of their Iraqi nationality for their Communist beliefs[29]. The destruction of Jama'at al-Ahali as an effective political force was complete, at least for the time being.

Clearly Jama'at al-Ahali took a major gamble when its members attached themselves to Bakr Sidqi and Hikmat Sulaiman. They had not managed to create a well-organised party machine, and had no safeguards against abuses of power by the military. They were also no match for their 'civilian' opponents, who represented deeply entrenched forces within the political system and were easily able

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27. Knabenshue to State Department: 26.6.1937, USNA 890G.00/410 However, 'Abd al-Razzaq al-Hasani claims that both Ja'f ar Abu al-Timman and Kamil al-Chadirchi had previously advocated the use of force against the Samawa tribes. For their letter of resignation, see Appendix J.

28. Husain Jamil, Bawakir, (1979),p.96.

29. Knabenshue to State Department: 19.8.1937, USNA 890G.00/B/9.

to crush them. The fact of their defeat had wide repercussions for the future of the national movement as a whole,which was weakened and driven underground, while various factions of the army came to dominate all governments until the fall of Rashid 'Ali in 1941. On the other hand, the experience certainly proved a valuable lesson for the group, particularly for al-Chadirchi, who became a leading figure in opposition politics in the 1940s and 1950s without ever holding a Cabinet post[30].

In a sense, the destruction of the movement can be seen as a fulfilment of Ibrahim's predictions. The group seems to have been prepared to abandon its ideology too easily and thus lost credibility among those who might otherwise have been prepared to support it. Its narrow dependence on the military was unlikely to result in the creation of a genuinely democratic system, and the group's decision to associate itself with Bakr and Hikmat can only be explained in terms of an act of desperation, perhaps underlining their lack of political experience. However, these criticisms should not obscure the fact that far stronger forces were at work within the political system, which would almost inevitably have combined to defeat the movement in other ways if it had ever shown signs of approaching the successful implementation of its ideals.

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30. According to al-Chadirchi's son Nasir, 'Abd al-Karim Qasim approached Kamil before the Revolution of 1958, asking him to accept the premiership if the revolution succeeded. al-Chadirchi categorically refused this offer.

Low Profile Political Activities, 1937-1942

During this period, al-Ahali's activities virtually came to a halt. The assassination of Bakr Sidqi and the overthrow of Hikmat's government was followed by the rise to power of the Pan-Arab army and civilian faction, which distrusted Jama'at al-Ahali for what they regarded as their indifference to Arab nationalism. Furthermore, international developments greatly affected the politics of the region, and pro-British and pro-German factions appeared on the political stage in every Arab state.

The group's activities in the late 1930s and early 1940s were confined to informal meetings and discussions, since all political associations were banned. Immediately after the ministerial resignations, al-Chadirchi and Isma'il left the country, while Abu al-Timman and the rest of the group stayed in Baghdad but did not take any part in public life. The former ministers were attacked in the government-sponsored newspapers, particularly al-Difa', al-Istiqlal and al-'Uqab. When Abu al-Timman tried to reply to these attacks, he was not permitted to publish his defence[31]. The campaign continued after the counter-coup which brought Jamil al-Madfa'i's government to power in August 1937. al-Chadirchi stayed out of Iraq

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31. Letter from Hadid to al-Chadirchi 8.8.1937; two letters from Abu al-Timman to al-Chadirchi, 18,24.7.1937. al-Chadirchi private papers, Baghdad.

until he heard of Sidqi's death[32] but Isma'il was not allowed to re-enter the country until 1958, and spent the intervening years in Paris and Damascus, in spite of appeals on his behalf by al-Chadirchi and Abu al-Timman[33].

Politics in the period after 1937 were dominated by a series of military coups, in which the Pan-Arab Golden Square emerged as the most powerful faction in 1939. The army group was led by Salah al-Din al-Sabbagh, and the civilian wing by Yunis al-Sab'awi, Sa'ib Shawkat and their supporters in Nadi al-Muthanna.Since Jama'at al-Ahali could have no influence whatever on the course of events, members of the group resumed their own careers. Abu al-Timman went back to business and became president of the Baghdad Chamber of Commerce; Hadid set up the first vegetable oil factory in Iraq; Husain Jamil went back to his legal work and become a judge; al-Chadirchi ran his estates, and Ibrahim, while remaining a secondary schoolteacher, also started al-Rabita press, which became the main source of progressive literature in the 1940s and 1950s. They all maintained an interest in politics and met every week at Abu al-Timman's house.

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32. al-Chadirchi stated his intention of remaining outside Iraq until he 'was assured of his safety from "the Dictator" ',Letter from al-Chadirchi (in London) to Hadid, 20.8.1937.

33. Isma'il first went to Paris, but left France at the outbreak of war in 1939. He then went to Damascus, where he joined the Syrian Communist Party. Sawt al-Ahali carried numerous petitions for permission for him to return to Iraq between 1942 and 1946.

In 1941, when the breach between the Pan-Arab and pro-British factions was evidently coming to a head, the group began by giving its support to Rashid 'Ali's government. On 5 April, when the Regent had left Baghdad, Abu al-Timman called a meeting at his house for members of Jama'at al-Ahali and other leftist elements. He stressed the need for all progressives to stand behind the government, although he expressed his own and the group's reservations about Rashid 'Ali personally[34]. al-Majalla, which was owned by Ibrahim, came out in open support of the government on 16 April. Yunis al-Sab'awi, who was Minister of Economics, managed to recruit Ibrahim and Hadid to the ministry to organise the rationing of essential supplies[35], and Jamil was appointed as a civilian member of the Baghdad military court[36].

The fall of Rashid 'Ali was followed a few weeks later by the German invasion of the Soviet Union, which led the Soviet Union to join the Allies. As a result, the political situation in Iraq changed completely, and Jama'at al-Ahali and the left as a whole moved to support the Allies against the Axis. For its part, the government was obliged to allow more freedom to democratic and left-wing elements; hence Sawt al-Ahali was allowed to resume publication in September 1942, and continued to function uninterrupted throughout the rest of the war.

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34. Interview with Ibrahim: al-Chadirchi,1970, p.54.

35. Interviews with Hadid and Ibrahim.

36. Interview with Jamil.

Chapter XI

The Resumption of Political Activities 1942 - 1946

The war and the British occupation brought severe hardships to most of the population of Iraq, though a small group of merchants and entrepreneurs were able to make substantial profits out of the acute shortages of essential supplies. However, the new political situation which permitted groups like al-Ahali to function more or less unrestricted coincided with the emergence of a greater degree of political consciousness, an expansion in the student population and the greater involvement of the labour movement in politics.

Rumours of a visit to Iraq by Stafford Cripps in February 1942[1] encouraged al-Chadirchi to re-establish contact with his old rival 'Abd al-Fattah Ibrahim. Together with Hadid, they prepared a memorandum on contemporary political, economic and social conditions in Iraq, together with suggestions for reforms in all fields. In the event, the visit was cancelled, but contacts had been resumed, and some of the old wounds healed. In the more relaxed political climate, the three were encouraged to consider the possibility of reconstituting Jama'at al-Ahali as an active political association and if possible to recommence publication of a newspaper.

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1. Monroe, E., Britain's Moment in the Middle East, 1914-1956, (London 1965), p.148.

In the course of his negotiations with al-Chadirchi, Ibrahim laid down two conditions on which he would insist before consenting to work with him again. In the first place, 'Aziz Sharif had to be included in the group, and secondly his brother 'Abd al-Rahim Sharif would have to take over the editorship of the newspaper[2]. The inclusion of the Sharif brothers would give Ibrahim some leverage in dealing with al-Chadirchi and Muhammad Hadid. al-Chadirchi gave his consent, and Sawt al-Ahali reappeared on 23 September 1942. It soon became the focus of progressive ideas, and was the only publication to put forward anything approaching left wing views.

The group's long term aim was to try once more to form a political party when the time was ripe, based on the principles of al-Sha'biya. Once again, however, personal differences surfaced and prevented the group from achieving this. Only three months after the paper reappeared, the old divisions emerged, between al-Chadirchi and Hadid on one side, and Ibrahim and the Sharif brothers on the other. Both Ibrahim and the Sharifs had moved closer to Marxism; the Sharifs had established contact with the Syrian and Iraqi Communist Parties, and Ibrahim had formed a Marxist group in Baghdad, Jama'at al-Rabita which was eventually to become the nucleus of a political party, Hizb al-Ittihad al-Watani. In contrast, Hadid and al-Chadirchi had become more moderate and restrained in their opposition to the

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2. al-Chadirchi, 1970, p.54: interview with Ibrahim; al-Mallah, 'A., (1972), p.27.

government and the political system in general.

Early in 1943, Hadid and al-Chadirchi were pressed by leading members of the Marxist and Communist left to be given space in Sawt al-Ahali to publish their own articles. The Communists argued that since they could not publish their own newspaper, they should be given access to the columns of Sawt al-Ahali where they would publish articles under their own names. al-Chadirchi and Hadid would not hear of such an arrangement, though naturally Ibrahim and the Sharifs were in favour. al-Chadirchi threatened to leave the paper if the arrangement was accepted, since he believed that the others were planning a major leftwing infiltration of the paper and the group, which would eventually deprive him of all control[3]. Similarly, he and Hadid were anxious that the paper should not appear too radical or aggressive, and that it should not alienate potential sympathisers or provoke suspension by the government. Thus they were fairly restrained in their criticisms of government policy, putting a democratic centralist position which they thought offered the best prospect for the paper and the projected political party.

In contrast, Ibrahim and the Sharifs advocated a return to the politics of confrontation, pressing al-Chadirchi to accept their demands for collective leadership and to set about forming a secret political party. This al-Chadirchi

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3. Interview with Hadid.

categorically refused to do and also rejected any interference on the part of other political groups in the running of the paper. Ibrahim and 'Aziz Sharif then suggested an editorial committee to run the paper, and a two-tier executive. The first tier would consist of the founders of Jama'at al-Ahali while the second would include representatives from all progressive groups, who would contribute articles and finance to the paper[4]. Once more, al-Chadirchi refused to budge and in March the Sharif brothers left the paper, followed in June by Ibrahim, who was unable to stand up to al-Chadirchi on his own and was in any case under considerable pressure from the left to leave Sawt al-Ahali[5]. The departure of Ibrahim and the Sharifs enabled al-Chadirchi and Hadid to start establishing a moderate progressive political movement.

al-Ahali kept up its demands for the establishment of more democratic and constitutional conditions and for the creation of a better climate for political activities, such as the formation of parties, trade unions, and social and cultural societies. The Regent's speech from the throne in December 1943 promised that the government would encourage the formation of political parties[6]. In May 1944, a group of

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4. al-Chadirchi, 1970, pp.57-66.

5. 'Aziz Sharif left to head Jama'at al-Watan, which later applied for permission to form Hizb al-Sha'b (The People's Party). He edited a series of books called Rasa'il al-Ba'th, on aspects of the national question, contemporary Arab politics and similar topics.

6. Sawt al-Ahali 29.12.1943.

Communist and Marxist lawyers, who were mainly supporters of 'Aziz Sharif[7] petitioned the government to form a political party, Hizb al-Sha'b (People's Party) but the government refused[8]. The group then issued a bayan holding al-Chadirchi responsible for the rejection of the application, and he was also attacked by the secret Communist paper al-Qa'ida[9]. The founders of the illegal Hizb al-Sha'b published another attack on him in al-Hawadith in February 1944 for his failure to form a political party, accusing him of defeatism[10]. These attacks were clearly designed both to demoralise al-Chadirchi personally and to reduce the influence and credibility of Sawt al-Ahali.

In reply, al-Chadirchi wrote an article in March affirming his beliefs in democracy, but also stressing that the time was not yet ripe for the formation of a political party and that the left elements did not represent a sufficiently coherent or homogeneous body of opinion[11].

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7. After leaving Jama'at al-Ahali, the Sharifs parted company with Ibrahim in the latter part of 1943.

8. Henderson to State Department: 4.5.1944, USNA 890G. 00/697.

9. al-Chadirchi, 1970, p.70.

10. Ibid., p.76.

11. Sawt al-Ahali, 3.3.1944.

Nuri al-Sa'id had also tried to take advantage of these evident splits in the opposition to recruit al-Chadirchi to his Cabinet[12] but of course the latter refused. Instead, he concentrated on building up support for himself and his ideas among moderate middle and upper class groups to form a centre party. The left continued to press him to join them throughout 1945 and 1946, and in fact suggested that he should head a national democratic coalition of right, left, and centre wings. Again, al-Chadirchi was not to be drawn:

> It is reported that endeavours made by Communists to bring together Kamil al-Chadirchi and 'Aziz Sharif have failed, and that Kamil al-Chadirchi is working with a group which includes H.E. Majid Mustafa, Hussein Jamil, Mohammad Hadid, and 'Abdul Kerim al-Uzri to form a party to be known as El Hizb el-Watani and that preparations have already reached an advanced stage. It is stated that the party will be very wide in its membership which will include many "Kurdish young men" and some notables.[13]

Finally, in August 1945 al-Chadirchi told a meeting of all progressive groupings and personalities that he was determined to have no further formal ties with them, and that he and his associates were in the process of forming the National Democratic Party[14].

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12. Sir K. Cornwallis to S/S Foreign Affairs: 19.2.1944, FO.371/40041/E1136.

13. Sir Hugh Stonehewer Bird to S/S Foreign Affairs: 30.5.1945, FO.371/45302/E4268.

14. al-Chadirchi, 1970, pp.72-73.

By the beginning of 1946, therefore, when Tawfiq al-Suwaidi's government came to power, Jama'at al-Ahali had split into three distinct groups, al-Hizb al-Watani al-Dimuqrati, headed by al-Chadirchi, Hadid and Jamil, Hizb al-Sha'b, headed by 'Aziz Sharif, and Hizb al-Ittihad al-Watani, headed by Ibrahim. In April 1946, the three parties were formally licenced by the government, together with Hizb al-Istiqlal (Independence Party) led by Mahdi Kubba, and Hizb al-Ahrar (Liberal Party) led by Yasin al-Khudhairi.

The National Democratic Party included several old members of Jama'at al-Ahali, such as Yusuf Ilyas, Sadiq Kammuna, and newcomers like 'Abd al-Karim al-'Uzri and Zaki 'Abd al-Wahhab. The first party meeting on 26 April was attended by some 760 members, mainly from Baghdad. The People's Party was composed mainly of Marxist lawyers, who later became either close associates or actual members of the Communist Party[15]. They included Tawfiq Munir, 'Abd al-Amir Turab, Hamid Hindi, Ibrahim al-Dargazalli, Na'im Shahrabani, Jirjis Fathallah and Salim 'Isa. The group adopted al-Watan as its official newspaper. It called for major social and economic reforms and was also interested in the national struggle in other Arab countries, particularly Syria, Lebanon and Palestine[16]. No official figures for membership are available, but the group claimed

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15. The Sharif brothers both became members of the Central Committee of the Iraqi Communist Party in the 1950s.

16. al-Watan, 25.2.1946, and passim, July-August-September 1946.

some 2000 members[17]. The National Unity Party was a smaller organisation, comprising about 500 members, mostly academics and intellectuals such as 'Abd al-Jabbar 'Abdullah, Nadhim al-Zahawi, Nasir al-Gailani, Kamil Qazanji, Muhammad Tawfiq Husain, Jamil Kubba, and the poet Mahdi al-Jawahiri, whose paper, al-Ra'i al-'Am became the group's official organ[18]. The party elected a Central Committee but no president, since it believed in the principle ofcollective leadership. However, Ibrahim was elected as leader of the politbureau.

Sawt al-Ahali between 1942 and 1946

In July 1942, while deliberations were taking place between members of Jama'at al-Ahali over the publication of their newspaper, Kamil al-Chadirchi submitted a memorandum outlining his suggestions for the contents of the paper and its future course, entitled Khittat al-Jarida (Plan for the newspaper). He suggested that the paper should be named Sawt al-Ahali and gave various guidelines. It should,

> call for the implementation of the democratic rights granted in the constitution such as free elections, the formation of associations, political parties and trade unions, and freedom of the press and of assembly.

The paper would also concern itself with suggesting suitable

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17. See correspondence between The People's Party and the National Unity Party in the Secret Police files for 1946. The GSO Library.

18. Later al-Jawahiri fell out with the leadership, and al-Siyasa became the group's newspaper.

and practical remedies for the country's problems, particularly in the spheres of land tenure, education, public health, labour, supply, and the general standard of living. Another area of concern would be to highlight the fight against Fascism by bringing home the damage which would have been done to the country and population had Germany occupied the Arab Middle East. At the same time the paper would explain why it supported the Allies and the democratic front[19].

As has already been described, the Sharif brothers and Ibrahim left the paper in the course of 1943, after a series of bitter disagreements with Hadid and al-Chadirchi. This development signalled the beginning of a more generally moderate line for the paper and less trenchant criticism of the government. al-Chadirchi felt that wartime conditions ruled out any policy of out and out opposition, especially as the government had sided with the Allies against Fascism. Furthermore, he felt that the group was in a position to benefit more (in the sense of gaining concessions and rights) from working within rather than outside existing structures. Such a policy would be most likely to create a stable base for the group's future.

The paper itself reappeared on 23 September 1942, numbered 76 of year 9, emphasising its continuity from the earlier Sawt al-Ahali. It had format similar to the older al-Ahali papers except that the caption "published by a

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19. Khittat al-Jarida (plan for the newspaper), al-Chadirchi private papers, Baghdad. A more leftist version of this appeared in the first issue of Sawt al-Ahali on 23.9.1942.

group of young men" had been omitted; by 1942 Kamil al-Chadirchi was 46. It quickly regained its former prestige because of the high quality of its journalism and its lively treatment of its subject matter. Circulation averaged 8000 issues, compared with 2500 - 3000 in 1932, and issues of the paper were almost always completely sold out.

Although Sawt al-Ahali remained critical of the political system and did not hesitate to point out the shortcomings and malpractices of the regime, it did so from inside rather than outside the system at least until the establishment of the National Democratic Party in 1946. It also refrained from outright criticism of Britain and the British occupation of Iraq, which it regarded as part of the sacrifices necessary to assist in the achievement of an Allied victory. Instead of initiating projects, as Jama'at al-Ahali had done in the 1930s, it suggested policies for the government to adopt, although the proposals generally fell on deaf ears.

The paper devoted a great deal of space to the progress of the war on the Russian front, emphasising the heroic sacrifices of the Soviet people and the Red Army. Although Britain and the United States were also given favourable coverage, the accent was very definitely on the Soviet Union. In this way al-Chadirchi could justifiably claim that he was adopting a leftist and progressive position in the face of accusations to the contrary. However, it is also noticeable

that Sawt al-Ahali was not suspended at all during this period, a reflection of its cautious policy towards the government and also of the government's generally more conciliatory attitude towards the left.

Another important change which came over the paper after the departure of Ibrahim and the Sharifs was a far greater concern for developments in the Arab world. Apart from giving far greater coverage of events in the area, Sawt al-Ahali advocated a kind of federal unity of independent states. When Husain Jamil rejoined the editorial staff at the time of the formation of the National Democratic Party in 1946, his articles showed the unmistakeable influence of Arab nationalist ideas. The paper began to publish the names of writers of articles at the same time, in order to give publicity to prominent members of the Party.

Iraqi Affairs[20]

Early issues of the paper in the autumn of 1942 concentrated on the necessity for national unity in the fight against Fascism. The paper advocated solidarity with the government in the face of the tense international situation, but it also called for the provision of genuine democratic institutions and civil liberties, together with the legalisation of trade unions and political parties, as well

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20. This survey of the principal interests of Sawt al-Ahali is more general in nature than that of the paper's predecessors in the 1930s. In the earlier period, the paper's reactions to specific political developments were crucial in shaping its tone and style. In the 1940s, in contrast, the general ideological guidelines remained more or less constant, showing greater restraint towards the government but a more systematic approach to political and socio-economic problems and issues.

as for reforms within the system as a whole. Furthermore, it continued the political-educational tradition that had been an important feature of the paper in the 1930s, explaining political systems and ideologies to its readers in almost every issue.

When al-Chadirchi became president of the Journalists' Union in December 1944, the Union campaigned for the abolition of censorship, since newspapers frequently appeared with blank spaces. Sawt al-Ahali stressed the need to create better relations between Britain and Iraq, since both countries were fighting the same enemy. It called on educated young people and progressive elements within the country to work together, and also attacked right wing nationalism, particularly that of the pro-Nazi Sami Shawkat, whom al-Chadirchi described as 'the Moseley of Iraq'. After the Regent's conciliatory speech from the throne in 1945, Sawt al-Ahali pressed more vigorously for democratic freedoms and the ending of the state of emergency. From this time onwards the paper developed an increasingly critical tone, which it maintained for the rest of the period of its existence[21]. On 4 April, the day after permission had been given for the formation of the National Democratic

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21. Sawt al-Ahali continued publication more or less continuously until 1957, when it was suspended and al-Chadirchi imprisoned for a year. After the Revolution of 1958 it continued publication until 1962; al-Chadirchi remained editor throughout the period.

party, the paper published an article on the leading role of Jama'at al-Ahali in pressing for political liberties, emphasising that the new party would continue the struggle until a truly representative government was formed.

The paper took a strongly critical line on the shortages and economic difficulties faced by the majority of the population in wartime and the profiteering which went on at their expense. It took the government to task for its mismanagement and incompetence, and called for the establishment of a central supply agency to monitor and control the prices and distribution of essential commodities. Five articles in September 1942 were devoted to the economic effects of the war on society in general, and the difficulties faced by ordinary people in all walks of life in obtaining daily necessities, urging the government to take greater advantage of Lend-Lease supplies. The paper continued to publish features of this kind throughout the remaining years of the war. It advocated the virtual nationalisation of the economy, supported the introduction of rationing in 1943, and called for measures to protect local industry and manufacture. It encouraged plans to create a central bank and the establishment of consumer co-operatives, and supported increases in the wages of the lower paid. The paper always concerned itself with the plight of the poorest members of society who were suffering most acutely from the current economic dislocation. Altogether it stressed the need for positive government intervention in the reconstruction of the economy after the war, and for a determined effort to reduce the immense polarity between rich and poor.

In the same way, Sawt al-Ahali was passionately concerned about health, education and welfare, suggesting free medical care, social security payments and compulsory free education for all. Only in this way, the paper claimed, could a truly democratic society be created. The Ministry of Education should be radically overhauled with the provision of modern text books and teaching methods. A university should be created in Iraq, and a number of vocational and technical colleges. Free meals should be made available at all educational institutions. Educated youngsters should help out in adult literacy centres. International standards on wages, conditions and working hours should be rigorously implemented. Sawt al-Ahali welcomed the government's decision to permit the formation of labour unions in 1945, although when it discovered that the Communist Party was in control of most of them it cautioned the workers against political interference. Nevertheless, when the Communist-dominated Railway Workers' Union called for a strike and was subsequently dissolved by the government, the paper supported the strike and protested at the closure of the union.

The paper was no less concerned about conditions in the countryside, criticising the exploitation of the peasants by shaikhs and landlords. It called for the introduction of modern machinery and the establishment of peasant co-operatives. Land should be given to the landless and seeds and fertilisers supplied. Priority should be given to the supply of water and electricity

and the establishment of minimum health and educational and housing standards in the rural areas.

Arab Affairs

As has already been mentioned, the new Sawt al-Ahali displayed a far keener interest in developments in the Arab countries than its predecessors. It took a moderate but positive line on Arab unity, stressing the paper's support for a form of nationalism which would accord high priority to political and socio-economic reform[22]. The paper believed that there was no necessary contradiction between democracy and nationalism, and that Arab nationalism would strengthen ties of all kinds between Arab states[23]. Particularly in 1942 and 1943, the paper called on the Arab countries to stand firmly on the side of the Allies against the Axis. As well as being justifiable on moral grounds, this action would also give the Arab states more leverage to press for genuine independence after the war. However, the paper also warned its readers not to be tricked again by the false promises which they had been given between 1914 and 1918, and urged the strict application of the Atlantic Charter to the Arab states.

Sawt al-Ahali thus gave warm encouragement to the various conferences of Arab lawyers, students, women and so forth which were held in 1944 and 1945[24]. However, when

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22. Min Ahdafuna al-Qawmiya in Sawt al-Ahali 7,11.12.1942.

23. Sawt al-Ahali always used the term Arab peoples rather than Arab people. More recent Arab nationalist doctrine stresses that the Arabs are a single people, and thus prefers the latter term.

24. e.g. Sawt al-Ahali 7.4.1944, 28.8.1944, 8.1.1945.

the representatives of the Arab states met at Alexandria in 1944 for the negotiations which were to lead up to the formation of the Arab League, the paper was extremely cautious, and advised the politicians to engage in realistic consultations with the people of their own countries, since they were afraid that this form of unification might simply serve the interests of the Imperial powers[25]. In the event, although the paper hailed the League as the "first stone in the structure of Arab unity" the very tentative nature of the arrangements seem to have come as a considerable relief. Sawt al-Ahali urged the League to take up a clear position on Palestine, Syria and Lebanon and the Maghrib both at its own meetings and at the United Nations[26].

Palestine was always one of the newspaper's major concerns: Zionism was always opposed as the creation of capitalism and imperialism[27], and the paper stressed that Palestine was an Arab country first and foremost. Illegal immigration should be stopped, and practical action and pressure should be employed. Popular movements would be more effective than press releases and speeches. In particular, the Supreme Council for Palestine should be elected by the people of Palestine, in order to function

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25. Ibid., 4.10.1944, 10.10.1944.

26. Ibid., 17,19.2.1946.

27. e.g. Ibid., 22.3.1943, 30.4.1943.

as a properly representative body in the fight against Zionism[28]. Again, the paper always supported the independence struggle in Syria and Lebanon, and praised the progressive political parties in Syria. It attacked the French for suspending the Lebanese parliament and arresting the Cabinet in November 1943[29]. It condemned the bombing of Damascus in May 1945, and called for the Arab League to take united action against France[30]. In a new departure, the paper took a special interest in Maghrib affairs, and followed the course of the war in North Africa. In this context too it declared that the states of the Maghrib should be covered by the terms of the Atlantic Charter, calling on France, the other Allied powers and the Arab League in turn to grant them independence.

International Affairs

The progress of the war received greater coverage in the paper than any other item. Sawt al-Ahali maintained its hope and belief that democratic and progressive forces would join to create a better world and defeat imperialism, fascism and reaction. It hailed the establishment of the United Nations, and the peace conferences at Yalta, Potsdam and Teheran. It also supported the establishment of world economic, social and cultural agencies. The Soviet Union attracted the paper's highest praise, and the birthdays of

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28. Ibid., 2.3.1944, 1.4.1946.

29. Ibid. various issues in November 1943.

30. Ibid., 21.5.1945, 29.5.1945, 1.6.1945.

Lenin and Stalin and the anniversary of the foundation of the Red Army were regularly and enthusiastically celebrated. The achievement of the Soviet Union in building what the paper saw as a more just society was also constantly discussed. Britain was no longer attacked as an enemy or occupying power, but praised for its stand against Fascism, and, as before, for its political and social institutions. The Labour victory in 1945 was celebrated by the paper, and Hadid and al-Chadirchi, in common with many of their contemporaries, believed that the new government would drastically change its relations with Iraq[31]. France was supported as an ally, but attacked for its policies in Syria, Lebanon and the Maghrib. Sawt al-Ahali criticised the United States for its general support of Zionism, but hoped that it would use its increased influence in world politics and particularly on France and Britain, to secure the independence of the Arab countries. It also hoped that Iraq would benefit from American aid to assist in the agricultural and industrial reconstruction of the country after the war.

By the end of the war, therefore, Jama'at al-Ahali now under the undisputed leadership of Kamil al-Chadirchi, had established itself as the principal focus of legal

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31. Ibid., 27,31.5.1945.

opposition. Its constant demands for political and socio-economic reform, put forward since 1942, had both echoed and served to crystallise popular sentiments for change. Its wide popularity made it a force to be reckoned with which, together with other local and international factors, had the effect of undermining the moral authority of the regime as a whole and forced the government of Tawfiq al-Suwaidi to concede a number of liberal measures for a brief but important period in 1946.

Chapter XII

Conclusion

In 1932, when Jama'at al-Ahali published its first newspaper, the bulk of the Iraqi population lived in conditions of abject poverty. Illiteracy was widespread, and ethnic and sectarian strife commonplace. Political consciousness was minimal and notions of civil rights or liberties confined to the educated few. The political system as a whole took little account of the most pressing concerns of the population at large, and political life was generally the preserve of a privileged minority. Even the opposition in the late 1920s and early 1930s generally concentrated on the issue of securing independence from Britain, and showed little interest in social or economic problems.

In this context, Jama'at al-Ahali was an entirely new phenomenon, since it was the first political grouping with an articulate and developed ideology linked to a strong social conscience. Furthermore, the founders of the group showed a remarkable degree of maturity and unselfishness by concentrating on raising levels of political and social consciousness rather than in advancing their own careers in the fashion of many of their contemporaries. Although from relatively well-to-do and educated backgrounds, they preferred to devote themselves to improving the position of the deprived majority, in the face of fierce opposition from entrenched vested interests.

In the beginning, Jama'at al-Ahali consisted of four young college graduates who were fired with ideas of political and social reform, and a profound desire to cure the ills of their society. Their experience abroad had led them to a keen realisation of Iraq's backwardness, and the belief that formal and political education could play a vital role in transforming the country. Thus they decided to establish a newspaper to disseminate their ideas, hoping to create a movement which might eventually be transformed into a mass political party. The general basis of their ideas was al-Sha'biya, a set of principles derived mainly from Fabian socialism, which was propounded in the pages of the various newspapers (al-Ahali, Sawt al-Ahali, al-Mabda' and al-Bayan) and in a number of books. The group remained aloof from participation in practical politics until it attracted the attention of prominent personalities like Kamil al-Chadirchi, Ja'far Abu al-Timman and Hikmat Sulaiman, who encouraged the original founders to broaden the scope of their activities. Hence in late 1933 the group inaugurated the campaign to eradicate illiteracy, Nadi Baghdad, the boycott of the Electricity Company and al-Sha'biya secret society.

The success of these activities, combined with the wide-ranging political connections and ambitions of al-Chadirchi, Abu al-Timman and Sulaiman led the group to embark on a far greater degree of participation in day to day political affairs. Beginning in 1935,they co-operated

with other politicians in intrigues with a number of tribal leaders which ultimately brought down the governments of 'Ali Jawdat and Jamil al-Madfa'i. However, when Yasin al-Hashimi came to power in March 1935, his government became particularly vigorous in its opposition to Jama'at al-Ahali and this was to drive the group into an uneasy but vital alliance with Bakr Sidqi and the Army, through the mediation of Hikmat Sulaiman.

In spite of the fact that the group played a key role in the preparation of the coup, and had a majority in the Cabinet, members of Jama'at al-Ahali were soon relegated to the role of spectators. Sulaiman sided with Sidqi, and this enabled the Army to arrogate more and more power to itself which eventually forced the Reformist ministers to leave the government in the process. Their programme was virtually ignored and their ability to influence the course of events became almost non-existent. Furthermore their association with Sidqi condemned them to the political wilderness until long after the latter's fall, since they were not acceptable to the Pan-Arab faction which dominated the political stage until 1941.

By 1942 however, changes in the local and international political situation which were generally more favourable to their ideas encouraged members to regroup and to resume publication of their newspaper. Thus Sawt al-Ahali reappeared in September 1942, and the group began its political activities once again. However, ideological and

personal differences soon reappeared, and eventually divided the group into three factions, which were to become the nuclei of three political parties. Of these, Kamil al-Chadirchi's National Democratic Party most closely resembled the original gradualist and social-democratic Jama'at al-Ahali before the coup of October 1936.

Jama'at al-Ahali was certainly not the first group to introduce what Batatu has described as 'ideas of a levelling nature'[1] into Iraq, and al-Sha'biya, its ideology, was derived from other political theories. However the group's main contribution was to make ideas of democracy, social justice and the accountability of the government to the governed gradually accepted as necessary and generally desirable components of political life, which before the appearance of Jama'at al-Ahali, was dominated almost entirely by factions centred around powerful personalities rather than definite programmes. In spite of all its deficiencies, al-Sha'biya provided an attractive and novel approach, with the promise of a just and democratic society which proved particularly inviting both to the growing numbers of educated young people and to some of the less well-off strata of urban society. Hence the group's major function was that of political education, in introducing different political ideologies, and in particular in stripping the facade of

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1. Batatu (1978), p.367.

respectability away from the system of government and revealing its deficiencies and inadequacies. It has been described as a school (madrasa) which introduced a whole generation to politics, but it also acted as an intermediary stage through which many passed on the way to more profound radicalisation.

Although Jama'at al-Ahali never exercised real political power the influence of their ideas and their popular newspaper over the past fifty years is undeniable. Under the monarchy they acted as a principal focus of opposition, constantly attacking the motives and policies of the politicians of the day whom they accused of serving the interests of Britain rather than Iraq. They tried to show that independence was not simply a matter of self-rule but of political and economic sovereignty. Furthermore, the notion of opposition was given a new meaning, since Jama'at al-Ahali did not seek office but a complete change in the political system and consistently opposed all governments until 1958 on the basis of principles rather than personalities. The strength of their effectiveness in fighting the various regimes can be gauged from the frequency with which the various newspapers were suppressed. Thus they created the notion of two distinct and essentially conflicting camps, the government and its supporters in one and the opposition, supported by the mass of the population, in the other. This polarisation led to the increasing alienation of the government and the ruling class and

contributed significantly to the ease with which the ancien régime was overthrown in 1958.

Given the particular composition of Iraqi society the fact that Jama'at al-Ahali was always essentially non-sectarian and had no ethnic bias whatever proved of major assistance to the national movement, which was particularly vulnerable to such pressures. The leadership worked harmoniously together, and the wide representation of all the major races and sects in the country was also reflected in the rank and file. Furthermore, over the period between 1932 and 1958 the movement attracted some of the most distinguished political activists of the day[2], and Abu al-Timman in the 1930s and 1940s, and al-Chadirchi in the 1940s and 1950s were the acknowledged leaders of the opposition, commanding the respect and admiration of all political factions.

However, in spite of the leading role played by Jama'at al-Ahali in the pre-Republican period, the fact remains that apart from a brief and heavily compromised period in 1936-37 the group never succeeded in achieving political power. This was partly because of factors inherent in the socio-economic and political structure of the country, and partly the result of failings within the group itself. In the first place, the activities and ideology of Jama'at al-Ahali represented a major threat to powerful and entrenched vested interests, which vigorously resisted

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2. See p. 380 below.

attempts to undermine their privileged positions. Secondly, the generally low level of political consciousness, and the desperate poverty and illiteracy of most of the population meant that the group had little in the way of solid foundations on which to build. Furthermore, their essentially moderate and gradualist approach eventually proved ineffective in circumstances which encouraged the growth of more radical ideologies.

As far as the group itself was concerned, there were a number of important disagreements between the founders on both ideological and practical matters, which resulted in conflicts and resignations. Personal differences were allowed to interfere with the smooth running of the newspapers and the organisation in general, particularly the clashes between Jamil and Isma'il and later between Ibrahim and al-Chadirchi. Although the core of the group agreed on the broad lines of al-Shab'iya, each member favoured a different approach which reflected his particular background and experience.

The decision to incorporate more senior and prominent political personalities also had a serious effect on the direction and future of the movement and diverted it from its original purposes. With the benefit of hindsight, it seems naive on the part of Ibrahim, Isma'il and Hadid to have underestimated the extent to which men like al-Chadirchi, Abu al-Timman and Sulaiman would attempt to utilise the movement for their own ends, rather than allow themselves

to be led by young men who lacked their own years of political experience. The recruitment of the three politicians had the general effect of transforming a potentially radical movement into an essentially centrist organisation. Jama'at al-Ahali failed to establish a solidly based political party and depended heavily on its newspapers, which were regularly suppressed. Furthermore, its activities were concentrated almost entirely on Baghdad in spite of the fact that the movement was widely supported in other parts of the country. Again, its members allowed themselves to become involved in intrigues which conflicted with their earlier ideology. In their eagerness to seize power, the group became a party to the tribal risings of 1934-37, and more significantly to the coup of 1936, which proved highly damaging to its image as an essentially principled organisation. Finally, Jama'at al-Ahali failed to take advantage of its position as a movement of the centre to play a mediating role between the left (represented by the Iraqi Communist party) and the right (represented by Nadi al-Muthanna): instead, they managed to alienate themselves from working relationships with both groups. These rifts gravely weakened the national movement and delayed the formation of a broadly based National Front until 1954.

This study has attempted to place Jama'at al-Ahali within the framework of the politics of the period, as one of the most significant components of the opposition under the monarchy. The various failings of the movement should not obscure the fact that it played a vital and pioneering role in spreading social democratic and liberal political ideas and made a major contribution to the national movement as

a whole. Moreover, the ideas of the founders of Jama'at al-Ahali have exerted, and continue to exert, an important influence on the political thinking of wide sections of Iraqi society.

Note 2: (p.376)

Some well-known political personalities who had joined, or associated with Jama'at al-Ahali between 1932 and 1946 and their future careers

Joined the Monarchical Regime

'Ali Haidar Sulaiman
Khalil Kanna
Jamil 'Abd al-Wahhab
'Abdullah Bakr
Fakhri al-Jamil
Darwish al-Haidari
'Abd al-Wahhab Marjan (Premier)
Nasrat al-Farisi
Naji al-Asil

Joined I.C.P.

'Abd al-Qadir Isma'il
Nuri Rufa'il
Nuri Tuma
Yusuf Isma'il
'Asim Flayyih
Yusuf Matti
'Aziz Sharif
'Abd al-Rahim Sharif
Yusuf Salman (Fahad)
Qasim Hasan
Nadhim Hamid
Na'im Tuwaiq
Zaki Khairi

Academics

Dr Ahmad 'Izzat al-Adhami
Dr 'Awni al-Khalidi
Dr Sabih al-Wahbi
Dr Fadhil Husain
Yusuf 'Izz al-Din

Arab Nationalists

Yunis al-Sab'awi
'Abd al-Razzaq Shibib
Isma'il al-Ghanim
Fa'iq al-Samarra'i

Left-Wingers & Marxists

'Abd al-Fattah Ibrahim
Nadhim al-Zahawi
Nasir al-Gailani
Zaki 'Abd al-Wahhab
Tal'at al-Shaibani
Kamil Qazanchi
'Ali al-Wardi

Trade Unionists

Muhammad Salih al-Qazzaz
Makki al-Ashtari

Became Ministers under the Republic

Muhammad Hadid
Husain Jamil
Mustafa 'Ali
Hasan al-Talibani
Tal'at al-Shaibani
Hudaib al-Hajj Humud
Hashim Jawad
'Aziz Sharif

Writers

'Abd al-Wahhab al-Amin
'Abdullah Jaddu'
Lutfi Bakr Sidqi
Muhammad Mahdi al-Jawahiri
'Abd al-Ghani al-Mallah
Mahmud Ahmad al-Sayyid

Appendix A

Secret Treaty signed in Baghdad on 25th April 1941 between Rashid Ali al-Gailani in the name of the Regent of the Kingdom of Iraq and duly authorised by the latter and the Minister of His Majesty the King and Emperor of Italy and Abyssinia (sic) in Iraq, duly authorised by his government, and in the capacity of representative ad referendum of the government of the Reich

The Treaty comprises 11 articles.

Article 1.

Italy and Germany recognise the government of Rashid Ali al-Gailani as the only national government of Iraq. The two above-mentioned countries undertake to give to the above-mentioned government whole-hearted support in its efforts to annul the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of Alliance as being contrary to the principle of Iraq's national sovereignty, if the royal Iraqi government should be forced to begin military hostilities against the British Empire in order to attain this object.

Article 2.

Italy and Germany recognise the necessity of the union of Iraq and Syria into one single kingdom under the sovereignty of His Majesty the King of Iraq.

Article 3.

Italy and Germany undertake to furnish to the royal government financial aid up to 10 milliard lire in the form of direct payments and also of long term credits for the supply of armaments, aircraft, tanks and all kinds of military requirements necessary for the conduct of a war against the British Empire.

As a guarantee for the repayment of this sum, the royal Iraqi government undertakes to provide a mortgage on the oil wells which are on its territory and also to allow Italian and German financial advisers for the organisation and control of the Iraqi Ministry of Finance.

Article 4.

Of the sum mentioned the equivalent of one milliard lire is paid directly to His Excellency Rashid Ali al-Gailani on the signature of the present treaty.

Article 5.

The Royal Iraqi government undertakes to nationalize all exploitations of oil on its territory and to create a "Special Exploitation Board" for these enterprises. Italy and Germany shall have a 75% participation in the management of this organisation, on the basis of a convention which shall be signed as soon as nationalisation has taken place.

Article 6.

The royal Iraqi government undertakes to furnish Italy and Germany concessions for the construction of pipe-lines to the Syrian coast ports which shall be leased to these two countries in accordance with article 7 of the present treaty.

All pipe-lines already in operation on Iraqi territory shall be placed under the "SpecialBoard for Oil Exploitation".

Article 7.

The royal Iraqi government undertakes to lease to Italy and Germany, after the realisation of the union of Iraq and Syria in one single kingdom, at least three ports on the Syrian coast for a period of 40 years with the adjacent zone of 25 kilometres radius. The payment of the lease shall be settled by a special agreement.

Article 8.

Italy and Germany shall have the right to organise on the territories leased to them, military, naval and air bases and to construct all kinds of fortifications. Territory leased in this manner shall be excluded from the competence of Iraqi Customs organisations.

Article 9.

The royal Iraqi government recognises Italy's special right to control and protect the Christian population throughout the territory of the future United Kingdom of Iraq and Syria. This right shall be exercised by a Commission specially appointed by the Italian government which shall be directly accredited to H.M. the King of Iraq and Syria as the representative of the Christian population of the Iraq-Syrian Kingdom.

Article 10.

If the Iraqi government finds it necessary to ask Italy and Germany for direct military assistance for the prosecution of the war against the British Empire, this will take the form of an officially announced declaration. The royal Iraqi government undertakes in these circumstances to require the powers, with which it is bound by Treaties of Alliance, to give to the Italian government complete collaboration in its intention of giving assistance to Iraq.

Article 11.

The present treaty, with the exception of Article 4, shall only become valid after completion by the signature of a duly authorised representative of the Reich.

The present treaty is secret, but shall be replaced after the realisation of the union of Iraq and Syria, by a new treaty to be public and based on the present treaty.

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Enclosure to despatch no.1885 of April 14, 1942, from American Legation, Baghdad, USNA 890G.6363/689.

Appendix B

Biographical details of the founders of Jama'at al-Ahali

'Abd al-Fattah Ibrahim

Ibrahim was born in Baghdad in 1905 to a middle class family. His father was a judge (qadi) who worked for the Ottoman administration and remained with the Ottomans until he was captured in 1917 and exiled to Henjam until 1922. 'Abd al-Fattah and the rest of his family had to move to his uncle in Basra, where he started his education. In 1919 he finished his baccalaureate and returned to Baghdad in order to continue his secondary education, staying with another uncle. During this time he began to become involved in political organisations and developed an interest in public affairs.

He graduated from secondary school in 1923 and in 1924 went to Lebanon to study history and political science at the American University of Beirut. In 1927 he graduated and returned to Iraq, and taught at a secondary school in Mosul [1], for a year and a half[2]. However, he disagreed with the education authorities on various matters of policy and was transferred to Basra. He resigned his job and left to study for an M.A. in Modern History at Columbia University[3]. Upon his return to Baghdad in 1931, he was approached by his relative, 'Abd al-Qadir Isma'il, and his friend Husain Jamil to form Jama'at al-Ahali and to establish the newspaper. Although Ibrahim participated in the project, he accepted a post as a translator with the Basra Port Authority, eventually returning to Baghdad in 1933 to replace Husain Jamil, who had left al-Ahali newspaper as a result of a conflict with 'Abd al-Qadir Isma'il. Ibrahim was the ideologist of the group, and besides writing much of its ideology and guiding the paper along with Ismail, he became the secretary of the Society for the Eradication of Illiteracy in 1933 and the President of the Baghdad Club in 1934.

Differences between him and Kamil al-Chadirchi[4] became acute in 1936, and he left the group in protest against its

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1. He would have preferred to work in Baghdad and in fact graduates were usually assigned to their home towns. He was sent to Mosul as a punishment for his anti-government and patriotic activities at the AUB.
2. One of his outstanding students was Yunis al-Sab'awi.
3. While a student at the AUB, Ibrahim read Professor Parker Thomas Moon's book Imperialism and World Politics. He was fascinated with the book and he corresponded with Moon and was accepted for the M.A. degree. He wanted to write his thesis on Anglo-Iraqi relations. He spent a year at Columbia collecting material for the thesis, but for family and financial reasons returned early. Later he wrote his excellent book On the route to India based on material he had collected at Columbia.
4. See Chapter X.

involvement with Bakr Sidqi. After the success of the coup d'état, he was approached and offered many positions by the members of Jama'at al-Ahali - except by Kamil al-Chadirchi - but he refused and remained in the Ministry of Education until 1946[5], when he resigned to form the National Unity Party, Hizb al-Ittihad al-Watani. In 1939 he formed a cultural and political club Jam'iyyat al-Rabita, and establishing a printing house, al-Rabita press, which published books by progressive authors[6]. He also published a newspaper for a short time as the party organ after he split from Sawt al-Ahali over a disagreement with Kamil al-Chadirchi. He remains the major shareholder and the Chairman of the Board of the Rabita Press and held a government post for one year only after the 1958 revolt, as the Director of Oil Refineries.

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5. During the May 1941 conflict between the Rashid Ali government and Britain, he was assigned by Yunis al-Sabawi, Minister of Economics at that time, to supervise the rationing of the supplies of necessary commodities. After the fall of the government he returned to teaching and in 1942 he became the Director of Education in Basra.

6. Some of the books published were by 'Abd al-Fattah Ibrahim, Hashim Jawad, Nadhim al-Zahawi and Zaki Salih.

Husain Jamil

Jamil was born in Baghdad in 1908 to an upper-middle class family[1]. His grandfather, father and uncle were all judges in the civil and religious courts. He studied at elementary schools at al-Haidariya in Baghdad and in 'Amara. At an early age he developed an interest in politics and history, reading Iraqi and Egyptian newspapers and magazines at home and at al-Ma'had al-'Ilmi (Scientific Institute)[2]. In secondary school he began his involvement in patriotic activities and secret societies. With his classmate and friend 'Abd al-Qadir Isma'il he organised and led students in strikes and demonstrations. He participated in the first pupils' strike, Shaikh Dhari's funeral, and in the al-Nasuli demonstration, after which he was expelled and later reinstated. In 1927 he entered Law School and was expelled for leading the huge demonstration against the visit of Sir Alfred Mond to Baghdad. He then studied at Law School in Damascus at his family's expense. He graduated in 1930 and returned to Baghdad to practice law and to resume his political activities. Later that year he was arrested, tried and acquitted, in the distribution of leaflets attacking the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty. In 1931 he teamed up with Isma'il, Ibrahim and Hadid, to form Jama'at al-Ahali and to publish al-Ahali newspaper, and became its managing director and owner. In the summer of 1933, after a sharp conflict with Isma'il, he accepted a government post as an assistant public prosecutor in Hilla. He continued his contacts with al-Ahali group and paper, so to weaken the link the government transferred him to 'Ana, a town near the Syrian border[3]. After the successful military coup d'état in 1936 he was appointed director of the publishing and propaganda department, but in 1937 he returned to the judicial branch. In May 1941, during the Anglo-Iraqi conflict, he was chosen by Rashid 'Ali's government to be a member of the Military Tribunal[4].

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1. Jamil considers his family, in the 1900s, as being petit bourgeois.

2. The Scientific Institute, al-Ma'had al-'Ilmi, was founded by Thabit Abd al-Nur to promote science and education in Baghdad.

3. Jamil was under police surveillance and his travels were recorded in his personal file at the General Security Office.

4. An order was issued by the emergency government to form the military tribunal but it never had the opportunity to convene. Interview with Jamil.

In 1942 he rejoined al-Chadirchi, Hadid and Ibrahim to publish Sawt al-Ahali and in 1946 he resigned his government post to become the Secretary of the National Democratic Party (al-Hizb al-Watani al-Dimuqrati). He was appointed twice to ministerial office, in 1952 and 1959. He also served as Iraq's ambassador to India and the United Nations. In the 1950s and 1960s he was elected president of the Iraqi Lawyers' Union and of the Arab Lawyers' Union. He still practises law in Baghdad.

'Abd al-Qadir Isma'il (al Bustani)

Isma'il was born in Baghdad in 1907 to a middle class family[1]. He studied in a Kuttab school then left to work with his uncle in a weaving factory for a period of time before returning to a government school. In his fifth year, he was expelled because he protested against the school administration, and had to continue his elementary education in a private school. In secondary school he became more active in political activities; Jamil was his classmate and Ibrahim, his cousin, came to Baghdad from Basra and lived near him.

Isma'il took part in the al-Nusuli demonstration and together with Jamil was expelled and later reinstated. He participated in the demonstration at the funeral of Shaikh Dhari and in 1928, as a freshman in Law School, was one of the organisers and leaders of the demonstration against the visit of the Zionist leader, Sir Alfred Mond, to Baghdad. He was expelled from Law School but was reinstated the following year, after pressure was exerted on the government. In 1930, along with many young students, he was arrested, tried and sent to prison for six months for activities against the 1930 Anglo-Iraqi Treaty. The sentence was suspended and he returned to college to graduate in 1931.

During these years he was active in elections, demonstrations, protests and in the student and labour movements. He also wrote social and political articles in the Iraqi newspapers and magazines. In 1928, he was the managing editor of a monthly magazine al-Shabab (Youth). Later he worked with the famous writer, Ibrahim Salih Shukur, whom he assisted in managing and editing his paper The Future, (al-Mustaqbal), which was considered an opposition paper. With this background, coupled with Isma'il's dislike for government employment, it was logical that he should practise law, to form al-Ahali movement and to publish al-Ahali newspaper with Hadid, Ibrahim and Jamil. He became the newspaper's manager and, in fact lived in the building in which the paper was housed. He remained in charge of running the paper until he left Iraq in July 1937.

He was greatly influenced by Marxist ideology, and was in contact with the Iraqi Communists. He earned the nickname 'Abd Qadir Ismailov', but did not in fact become a Communist party member until he left Iraq. In 1935 he was put on trial accused of being a Communist party member and for publishing Communist leaflets, but was acquitted

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1. His father came originally from India, but married an Iraqi and took Iraqi nationality in June 1930. He worked as a clerk in the Qadiriya Awqaf.

for lack of evidence[2].

Isma'il supported al-Ahali's involvement in the military coup d'état in 1936, and after the success of the coup he led the biggest demonstration Baghdad had ever seen in support of the coup. In 1937 he was elected a deputy for his home district[3], and was one of the founder members of the 'Popular Reform League'.

As a result of the rift between al-Ahali and Bakr Sidqi, Isma'il had to leave Iraq for Syria, after an attempt on his life and warnings from his friends in the Army. He left for France, and the Iraqi Ministry of Interior issued an order in 1937 stripping Isma'il and his brother Yusuf who was studying law in France, of their Iraqi citizenship, and prohibited them from entering Iraq, because of their 'Communistic activities and agitating the people and disturbing the peace'.

In 1939 he was expelled from France and came to Syria and Lebanon to spend the war years in great hardship. He was imprisoned by the French authorities, went into hiding, became a cadre of the Syrian Communist party, and in 1948 became a member of the Central Committee. After the 1958 Revolution in Iraq, Isma'il's citizenship was reinstated and he returned to Baghdad to become the editor of Ittihad al-Sha'b, the Iraqi Communist party organ until 1960, when it was suppressed by the Qasim's government.

He lives in retirement in Baghdad.

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2. He was under police surveillance. In his file, the police recorded all his movements, contacts, travels. The General Security Office.

3. Isma'il was offered various high positions in the coup government, but he refused and told Ja'far that he was only interested in representing the people, which is why Abd al-Timman insisted on nominating and securing Isma'il in the elections against Bakr Sidqi's objections. Sidqi made it obvious that he disliked him. Interview with Isma'il.

Kamil al-Chadirchi[1]

al-Chadirchi was born in Baghdad on 4th April 1897, to an aristocratic family of Turkish stock. His father Rifa't was a high Ottoman official and was Mayor of Baghdad several times. Kamil finished his secondary school education in 1913, and served a short period in the Ottoman Army, from which he was discharged on "health grounds". After the war his father took part in the 1920 Revolt and was ordered to leave Baghdad. He chose to go to Istanbul, where he took the whole family except Ra'uf, the eldest son. Kamil entered Istanbul Medical School in in21, but left and returned to Iraq in 1922 to enter the Baghdad Law School. Whilst a student, he was employed as secretary to the Governor of Baghdad (Naji Shawkat, who later married the sister of Kamil's wife). In 1926 Yasin al-Hashimi appointed him Assistant to the Minister of Finance, in charge of the parliamentary division. In 1927 Yasin chose him to run for election; he eventually won a seat in the Parliament as a member of Yasin's Hizb al-Sha'b (The People's Party).

In 1930 he joined the newly formed Hizb al-Ikha al-Watani under Yasin's leadership, and was elevated to the Party's Central Commission. At election time, however, he lost his seat, mainly due to lack of support from Yasin and Rashid 'Ali, as differences began to emerge. Between 23 August 1931 and 30 June 1932, he was editor of the Ikha's party organ and was tried and sent to prison for his severe criticism of Nuri al-Said's government. When Rashid 'Ali and the Ikha' party defied the Ta'akhi Charter with Hizb al-Watani and accepted the position of Chief of the Royal Diwan, al-Chadirchi

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1. The information is taken mainly from the following sources:
   (1) al-Chadirchi, (1970),pp.11-13;
   (2) Khadduri, (1973), pp.128-142;
   (3) al-'Umari,K., (1970), pp.52-68;
   (4) al-'Umari,K., (1968), pp.36-49;
   (5) Khadduri, 'Political Ideology in the Arab World',Hawar, 5th year,Vol.213,Beirut (1967);
   (6) al-Chadirchi Private Papers, kept at his son Nasir's Library;
   (7) Interview with Nasir al-Chadirchi;
   (8) GSO - al-Chadirchi private file.

   For more detailed and descriptive information about al-Chadirchi's private life, his growth and his family, please refer to al-Chadirchi,(Beirut,1971),pp.16-60. (In Khadduri's three books, the author points out that al-Chadirchi joined al-Ahali in 1934, but the right date is in the middle of 1933).

resigned from the executive committee, and later from the Ikha' party, to join Jama'at al-Ahali.

In general, al-Chadirchi was highly educated, and widely read in Arabic, Turkish and English, His son Nasir says that during the early years of his interest in politics his "chief preoccupation was with such questions as British control of domestic affairs and the ways and means of achieving independence. Intellectual curiosity led him to read various works of political thought and he became fascinated with the idea of democracy, which he adopted as a political creed and a principle of life'[2]. In one of his articles on sovereignty and democracy, he advocated the need for public participation in a truly parliamentary democracy in order to achieve progress[3].

al-Chadirchi always wished to attract attention; he felt he was different, due to his upbringing by his tough, uncompromising father[4]. It therefore seemed natural that he should join the opposition camp against the government. Two parties existed then - Abu al-Timman's al-Hizb al-Watani, which was predominantly comprised of merchants, and Yasin's Hizb al-Ikha' al-Watani, which consisted mainly of landowners and a few young Effendis. Kamil, who had large estates in Hilla, was chosen to serve on the Ikha' party's central committee, which occasioned considerable jealousy. Thus he was determined to prove himself, and although, according to Rufa'il Butti, the editor of the party organ, al-Ikha' al-Watani, he did not have a strong base in the party, he never missed an opportunity to show his abilities.

He led a campaign criticising the policies of Nuri al-Sa'id's first cabinet and extended his attack to the King himself, for siding with Nuri's camp against the opposition[5].

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2. Interview with Nasir al-Chadirchi.

3. Kamil al-Chadirchi, 'al-Siyasa wa al-Dimuqratiya', (Sovereignty and Democracy), al-Bilad, August 28, 1931.

4. Interview with al-Chadirchi's cousin and brother-in-law Mahmud Subhi al-Daftari.

5. al-'Umari, K (1970), p.54.

al-Chadirchi stood three trials in court cases brought against the paper. During the trials and in defence he demonstrated his eloquence and his strong beliefs in freedom and democracy[6]. He was sent to prison and ordered to pay fines. As a result of this stand, al-Chadirchi felt confident that he deserved a prominent position in Ikha's party, but this was not to be the case, and he joined Jama'at al-Ahali in the middle part of 1933. Chadirchi's subsequent career until 1946 has been discussed in detail in Part III above. He remained the leader of the National Democratic Party until 1961, and had led the party into a national front in 1954 and 1957. al-Chadirchi remained a powerful figure in opposition politics, but never took political office after his brief period as a minister between 1936 and 1937. He died in Baghdad in 1968.

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6. al-Chadirchi private papers: the court cases were brought because of the following articles:
   (1) The poem Jaras al-Nahdha (The Bell of Resurgence), 11.9.31.
   (2) An editorial attacking the government paper al-Iraq, 14.9.31.
   (3) The paper support of the Municipal strike of July 1931, and for publishing the "Artisan Society" in July, and for defending the strike.

Muhammad Hadid

Hadid was born in Mosul in 1906 to a wealthy merchant and landowning family with interests in local and national affairs. His father was active in the campaign to keep Mosul within Iraq. Muhammad Hadid finished his elementary education in Mosul in 1924 and was sent by his father to continue his education at a school attached to the American University of Beirut. He spent three years in Beirut and returned to Mosul for one year before leaving for England to study at the London School of Economics, reading Economics and Politics, with Professor Harold Laski. Hadid graduated in 1931 and returned to Baghdad. He was persuaded by Ibrahim Kamal to work at the Ministry of Finance, and shared an office with Yusuf 'Izz al-Din Ibrahim, his closest friend and the future Minister of Education in the 1936 coup government.

Soon after his return, Hadid was approached by 'Abd al-Fattah Ibrahim, his friend from AUB, and together with Jamil and Isma'il they formed Jama'at al-Ahali and established al-Ahali newspaper. Muhammad Hadid was the only founding member who remained within the movement from the beginning and until the end, although under rather different circumstances. In the period between 1932 to 1936, he took a prominent role in the group's activities, but never a leading role. After the success of the 1936 coup, he was elected a deputy in the Chamber of Deputies, but after the fall of Hikmat's government he decided not to return to government service but to establish an industrial enterprise. Thus he established the Vegetable Oil Company, which began production in 1943 and became extremely successful. In 1946 he was elected vice-president of the National Democratic Party, remaining al-Chadirchi's right-hand man until 1961. He was also briefly Minister of Supply in Nuri al-Sa'id's government in 1946.

In 1958, he was invited by Qasim to be Minister of Finance, holding the post until 1962. After 1963, he took no further part in politics, although he maintained a strong interest.
He is still active, running his various business and industrial enterprises.

Appendix C

Translation of Minhaj al-Sha'biya

Khulasat al-Sha'biya

A. al-Sha'biya

1. There is no comprehensive definition of al-Sha'biya; it is a specific point of view on all the different problems which society encounters.

2. These problems are divided into political, economic, and social. al-Sha'biya aims to solve them in such a way as to ensure security, prosperity and progress for society.

3. Security means that every individual is assured of personal safety and rights. Individual rights mean freedom, equality and the right to employment in such a way as to secure the fullest utilization of an individual's capabilities.

4. Prosperity means the provision of a minimum standard of living at which an individual can secure his material and spiritual needs and the provision of such luxuries as the public budget will allow.

5. Progress means the continuous improvement in the quality of life of the society. This is achieved either by conserving human resources or increasing the quality of life in the society.

B. al-Mabadi' al-Sha'biya al-Siyasiya (The Political Principles of al-Sha'biya).

1. The existence of the state is necessary to ensure security, prosperity, and progress for the people.

2. The state must have total internal and external sovereignty; true sovereignty belongs to the people.

3. The system of the government must be constitutional and democratic.

4. In the state's relations with individuals, it must have the right to intervene in order to organize society.

C. al-Mabadi' al-Sha'biya al-Iqtisadiya (The Economic Principles of al-Sha'biya).

1. Planning: The State should establish a central planning body to secure the organisation of economic life in accordance with the economic conditions of the country and in response to the requirements of the people.

2. Industry: The State should control key industries, either by establishing them directly or by participating in capital investment to an extent which secures government control.

The State should allow individuals to establish small industries and private workshops, and it should sell the products of government industries directly to consumers.

3. Public Services: The State should own all public services such as tramways, railways, ships, electricity and water supplies.

4. Agriculture: The government should distribute miri lands to peasants, so that they can utilize them directly. It should establish government farms and collect taxes on small holdings at a lower rate than on larger holdings.

5. Distribution: The government should encourage the establishment of cooperatives for distribution and will grant them financial and other assistancees.

6. Disparities of Wealth: The government will attempt to decrease disparities of wealth as much as possible by:

a - Progressive Income Tax
b - Progressive Death Duties.

7. Employment: It is the duty of the government to provide employment opportunities for every citizen to ensure acceptable standards of living and the mental and physical health of workers.

8. Banks: The government will establish different kinds of banks and all financial transactions should be transferred to these banks.

D. al-Mabadi' al-Sha'biya al-Ijtima'iya (The Social Principles of al-Sha'biya).

1. Education:

a - Free general elementary education.
b - A campaign to eradicate illiteracy.
c - The Establishment of cultural and educational institutions.
d - The establishment of public libraries for the whole population.
e - The establishment of cinemas, theatres, and music halls.
f - The creation and development of enthusiasm for physical education and sports and the provision of the necessary equipment.

2. Health:

a - The establishment of general and maternity hospitals, and mother and child care centres.
b - The expansion of public health facilities to ensure a minimum level of prevention and protection from disease for every individual.

c - Securing sanitary housing conditions through:
1. Town planning on a healthy basis,
2. The construction of simple, cheap and sanitary houses for rent or for sale for small payments or low mortgages,

3. Personal Relations and Family:

a - The enactment of laws in conformity with the needs of modern living to ensure the welfare of the population.

b - Working for the emancipation of women while protecting the sanctity of the family.

al-Ahali press
Baghdad 1932

Appendix D

The Pact of the People

Demands of the Euphrates Leaders Submitted to His Beatitude Shaikh Mohammed al-Hussein al-Kashef al-Ghata for Transmission to the Appropriate Authorities

We, the undersigned, leaders of the Middle Euphrates, hereby submit our legal demands,the purpose of which is to improve the condition of the Kingdom of Iraq in order that the country may advance in the ranks of civilized nations; that it may advance, exercising justice and equality among its various classes and elements; and may demonstrate it is worthy of independence under the aegis of His Hashimite Majesty. We submit our demands to His Beatitude Shaikh Mohammed al-Kashef al-Ghata, our religious leader, the great reformer and authority on Islam and Moslems, to have them transmitted to our August King, His Majesty King Ghazi I and to his respected government; and we ask that they be put into effect. His Beatitude is our representative and our envoy plenipotentiary, whose orders, which are to our interest, are duly carried out by us. In witness of our goodwill we give him this undertaking as our pledge to safeguard foreign interests in the country, to respect international treaties, to insist on the execution of necessary reforms and on the realization of our lawful demands at whatever cost.

Article I. Ever since the inception of the Iraq Government a stupid policy has been pursued which has been contrary to the people's interest. A policy of discrimination among the different communities has been used as the basis of rule. The majority of the people have been represented in the Cabinet by one or two Ministers who keep pace with the policy (of the majority)*. The Government has acted upon this basis in engaging employees. Partiality in appointments of officials and members of the Chamber of Deputies has been manifest, whereas Article 6 of the Constitution makes no discrimination among the people of the country. In order to restore confidence in the people and to eliminate discrimination, all groups should participate in the Council of Ministers, in Parliament, and in other Government appointments as they do in military conscription and taxation.

Article II. Present laws for parliamentary elections have been abused to an extent that Parliament does not truly represent

*Note. It is probably meant that the one or two Shiah Ministers generally follow the opinion of the Sunni Ministers, who have a majority in the Cabinet.

represent the country. In order that the Government may not tamper with the elections we think it advisable that the electoral laws be modified. They should ensure complete freedom and should include restrictions which would prevent the Cabinet from interfering in them directly or indirectly. Elections should be direct, each liwa to be considered as an independent electoral college.

Article III. Article 77 of the Constitution provides the appointment of Qadhis of the sect to which the majority of the inhabitants of the place to which he is appointed belong, whereas actually religious legislative authority is granted to Qadhis belonging to a minority of the inhabitants. We demand that the provisions of this article of the Constitution be enforced and that the Ja'fari (Shiah) religious law be taught in the Iraq Law College.

Article IV. Whereas, the Iraq Court of Cassation is the only recourse for safeguarding the life and property of the people; and whereas, Christians, Jews and other elements are represented on this court; we demand that a Shiah be appointed in each and every branch of this court in order to be confident of the judgment of the courts.

Article V. As the Press is the medium through which the people express their opinion, it is necessary to allow freedom of the press, to remove administrative restrictions, and to confine responsibilities to the courts in accordance with the spirit of Article 12 of the Constitution.

Article VI. The Awqaf are Moslem endowments made for the purpose of serving the Shara' and of maintaining the people in charge of it or enlisted in its service. The Government's policy has, however, been directed towards another aim. The Awqaf revenues are spent on administrative organizations, and houses of learning and pious establishments, are neglected. The policy which has been followed thus far should be discarded and Awqaf revenues should in future be spent on Islamic institutions in general.

Article VII. Land settlement committees though which agricultural settlement may be realized should be increased and altered. We demand that the law for the formation of an agricultural and industrial bank be put into effect as soon as possible, and that land be given to its cultivator free of charge.

Article VIII. Abolition of land and water taxes. Use of the Istihlak (consumption) system in the collection of Koda tax. No tax should be collected on water lifts.

Article IX. The number of Government appointments is continuously increasing owing to the absence of a cadre. The salaries paid by the Government are high in view of the economic situation and the standard of living. Officials have been careless in serving the interests of the people, and have neglected local laws. Immediate measures should be taken to remove all officials of bad reputation, to reduce the

salaries of officials to a reasonable extent in order to reduce the expenditures of the state, and also to reduce civil and military pensions.

Article X. Justice has not been done in allocating health, constructional and educational institutions in the country according to the distribution of population, especially in the southern part. Laws and regulations should be enacted against social and moral diseases. Educational programs should be improved. Religious instruction, like other sciences, should have a place in the examinations. Public morality should be protected. Public prostitution should be suppressed. Public sale of alcoholic drinks, gambling and anything leading to the ruin of morality should be prohibited.

Article XI. Those who have participated in the present national movement, whether the people, officials, the army or police, should not be touched.

Article XII. Suppression of the laws contrary to these demands and their replacement by other legislation which will ensure their execution.

--Al-Ra'i Press, Nejef.

Enclosure No.1 to despatch No. 466 of April 14, 1935
from the American Legation at Baghdad

Appendix E

Translation of "Programme of Policy" issued by Cabinet of Saiyid Hikmat Sulaiman.

The new Cabinet undertook responsibilities at a time when the people had been reduced to despair. It came to power to do away with the previous state of affairs, and to start a new era of general reform in every sphere of the life of the nation.

This programme, therefore, includes only such undertakings as are to be carried out forthwith or in the near future, in accordance with the principles laid down, as follows:-

Foreign Policy.

The Cabinet proposes:-

1. To strengthen the co-operation between Iraq and Great Britain, and to continue efforts to ensure that all possible financial, economic and military benefits are derived from the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of Alliance.

2. To strengthen the ties of friendship and co-operation between Iraq and the Turkish Republic, and to use every endeavour to hasten the conclusion of a non-aggression pact between Iraq, Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan.

3. To continue the friendly relations between Iraq and Iran, and employ every means to strengthen them, and to settle all outstanding questions between the two countries.

4. To strengthen brotherly relations with the Kingdom of Ibn Saud and with the other Arab States; and to maintain and cement the friendly relations between Iraq and all other States.

Internal Administration.

The amendment of the Civil Servants Law, the Disciplinary Law, and all regulations relating to the engagement and promotion of officials, with a view to ensuring the creation of a civil service on the principles observed by all other civilised nations, taking into consideration the following points:-

1. That special care should be taken to select for Government appointments only educated youths of good character.

2. To ensure that they carry out their duties efficiently.

3. That the promotion of officials appointed on these lines should be carried out in a regular and impartial manner.

4. The settlement of all disputes among the tribes, whether such disputes arise through land or other questions, with complete impartiality.

5. The settlement of the nomadic tribes who have no lands, by giving each family sufficient land to ensure their livelihood, and to introduce the legislation necessary for this purpose.

Health.

To increase the number of hospitals and medical

institutions; to engage sufficient doctors to meet the country's needs; to raise the scientific standard of the Medical College, the Midwifery School, the Health Officials School, and the Pharmacy School; and to enlarge these institutions in order to increase the number of graduates.

To establish new medical units and special institutions in order to combat diseases which threaten the existence of the nation, such as venereal disease, malaria, and others; to promote child welfare institutions, and to raise their standard by placing them in charge of trained women capable of teaching mothers correct methods of caring for their children.

Prisons.

To introduce the latest reforms in the prison system; to educate and train the prisoners so that, when, released, they may become useful citizens; and to improve conditions in the reformatory schools.

Municipalities.

To improve conditions in the municipalities; to increase the number of public parks, gardens, and sports grounds; to supply municipalities with all the technical assistance required in order to ensure proper town-planning, and an adequate supply of drinking water and electric light in every town and village; to improve labour conditions by encouraging labour unions and by constructing houses for the labouring classes.

Police.

To raise the standard and capacity of the police force so that it will be able to perform its duties in the most efficient manner.

Finance.

To prepare a permanent cadre for officials in conformity with the country's requirements.

To improve the financial administration so that all the revenues of the State are collected without undue loss of time or giving rise to complaint.

To consolidate the system of financial inspection to ensure effective supervision.

To prepare a general programme of capital works, each of which shall be completed in its allotted time.

To amend all out-of-date financial laws, especially those relating to taxation and, more particularly, income-tax, in order to make it more equitable and logical; to take steps to replace, in time, the present land system by a cadastral system; to take measures to improve the internal and external trade of Iraq in order to balance them as far as possible.

To open spinning and weaving factories to supply the army, the police, and students with their clothing requirements.

To expand the Agricultural and Industrial Bank so that it may be capable of fostering industrial schemes, and

improving the quality of Iraqi products.

To supervise the activities of banks, companies, and other economic institutions, and to introduce legislation to ensure the development of Iraq's resources through the employment of insurance money in Iraq.

To settle the land question on principles of equity and public interest, and to divide State lands which are still uncultivated among the people in such a way as to preserve the rights of individuals.

Justice.

To ensure equality before the law and to administer justice impartially; to strengthen the spirit of independence and impsrtiality in administering the law; to reconsider the system of appointing and promoting judges, as well as all questions connected with their transfer and discipline; to raise their standard and broaden their legal knowledge.

To reconsider the laws connected with the constitution of the courts; to reform the present laws of procedure, and the civil, commercial and criminal laws, in a manner consistent with the sound development of the country.

Defence.

To lay down fixed rules for the expansion of the army and, more particularly, the air force, and to increase its strength on the most modern lines in order to make it capable of defending the integrity of the country.

To rely as far as possible upon the country's own resources in providing for the needs of the army, and, when important economic schemes are undertaken (such as the construction of roads, bridges and factories, and the establishment of air and other transport companies), to reconcile civil and military needs.

To strengthen the co-operation between the different sections of the community and the army and to popularise military training.

Economic Sphere.

To pay special attention to productive schemes which increase the country's wealth, such as the undertaking of large irrigation schemes; the improvement of the country's principal roads; the construction of important bridges; the improvement of means of transport and communication; the introduction of reforms in the agricultural administration; the improvement of the quality of Iraq's products; the expansion of afforestation; the improvement of the quality of livestock and measures to combat their diseases; to carry out all schemes which are necessary for the expansion of industry; the construction of an oil refinery; and to develop generally the country's resources.

Education.

To popularise education among the younger generation; to raise the standard of educational missions abroad, and limit their training to branches of knowledge which are essential for the rapid development of the country.

To expand education in the villages; to improve industrial education; to abolish secondary school fees; to improve the general knowledge and capacity of teachers of both sexes; to build the required number of Government schools on modern lines; to ensure a proper system of examinations; and to lay down a permanent programme for all branches of education.

To hasten the construction of the new Iraqi Museum.

Appendix F

Translation of Letter

From: Mulla Mustafa Barzani

To: H.M. Sir Kinahan Cornwallis, His Majesty's Ambassador in Iraq

Dated: 24th December, 1943.

A.C.,

I congratulate you on the occasion of the happy 'Id, praying God to let us enjoy a genuine 'Id through distinct victory for the armies of Great Britain, which is sought by all right-thinking people.

Availing myself of the 'Id, which is a special occasion for jubiliation and rejoicing, I earnestly pray the just British Government and your esteemed person to answer my plea for pardon for all of us and for the return of our imprisoned and interned followers and our "brigands"(sic). The wrong we have been suffering has become too acute for description. We pray Your Excellency not to refer us to other than your doorstep, for we have no friend besides you. If any body should make any accusations or allegations against us, we pray you not to listen to him. The only thing we can take pride in is compliance with Your Excellency's orders at no matter what cost. We have laid our grievance before the just Government of Great Britain and before your compassionate person. Nothing is too much to hope for from your justice.

I pray God to grant you distinct victory.

Please accept my highest respect.

Yours sincerely,

Enclosure to
Sir K. Cornwallis to S/S Foreign Affairs: 26.1.1944,
FO.371/40038/E234.

Translation of Letter

From: Mulla Mustafa Barzani.

To: H.E. Sir Kinsham Cornwallis, His Majesty's Ambassador.

Dated: 25th December, 1943.

A.C.,

I beg to acknowledge the eceipt of your order in the letter dated 21st December, 1943. Whatever your orders I shall obey them as child would the orders of a compassionate father. I have the fullest confidence in "Your Majesty"(sic); while our friendship for the merciful British Government knows no bounds. As regards the fair counsel of British officials, this we have received and listened to; but officials of the Iraqi Government had so acted towards us that we got estranged and found ourselves compelled to act in self defence. As regards The Iraqi Government's (promise of) pardon for us, this promise is only a spoken word which we would not see translated into action. They intend betraying us. We have evidence of this in their saying "W e have pardoned you" while on the other hand they arouse the tribes and distribute arms to them. In view of this, a section of the people like us speak of a (contemplated) betrayal. In any case, we take pride in bowing down to Your Majesty's orders (Literally: Your Majesty's orders we proudly place over our eyes and head - Translator). Nevertheless, according to what we hear with our own ears and see with our own eyes, the British Government are just and merciful. They defend the oppressed against their oppressors, listen to the complaints of those who are suffering wrong, and offer succour to those who can find no means of succour elsewhere. Accordingly to them I address myself for redress against the most violent wrong I suffer at the hands of a section of Iraqi Government officials, Your Majesty's door is never closed in the face of those seeking succour at your doorstep. Hence I seek succour at Your Majesty's doorstep, most earnestly proving you to accept my plea and have compassion with me in my poor condition, and issue your orders to have despatched to me Major Stepping, on your behalf, and someone also representing the Iraqi Government, to honour me, I your loyal servant: Major Stepping to act as umpire in my case, proceeding according to the law of the Great British Government. If under that law I stand condemned, I shall accept his (Major Stepping's) award, even though it may mean death sentence for me. If, on the other hand, Major Stepping finds out that I have a grievance and that the Iraqi Government have oppressed me, I would pray Your Majesty to instruct the Iraqi Government to pardon me, set free our "prisoners" (? imprisoned followers) and repatriate our internees, when we shall live in our homes and most faithfully serve them (the Iraq Government) in accordance with Your Majesty orders. As against that, I shall pledge myself to undertake that there shall be no rebellion or brigandage in this region for as long as I may live. Your Majesty, with the might of the Great British Government behind you, will guarantee my faithfulness to such pledge and undertaking on my part. I await Your Majesty's orders to comply with them at no matter what cost. I pray God to give support and victory to Britain's armies against her enemies.

Yours sincerely,

Appendix G

The Programme of the Popular Reform League

Its Aims

To endeavour, by means of political, social and economic reforms, to safeguard the public interests and to ensure the progress of the individual members of the community and to put down exploitation.

How these Aims will be Achieved

1. Foreign Policy.

The cultivation of closer relations between all Arab countries and the development of intercourse between people's organisations in those countries. The strengthening of friendly relations with the neighbours of Iraq and other foreign countries on the basis of mutual equality.

2. Internal Policy.

(a) The strengthening of the internal organisation of the State through the further development of the army and the air force, through the military training of members of popular organisations and the reform of the police in order that these forces may be fit and ready to defend the country against any external aggression.

(b) The grant of full opportunity for the free expression of thought and the exercise of all progressive democratic liberties.

(c) The spread of culture among all classes of the people in a just manner.

3. Economic Policy.

To endeavour to raise the standard of living of the people and to ensure to every person the means to obtain the moral and material necessities of life. To ensure to all, in addition, such luxuries as the wealth of the nation may make possible.

(a) The nationalisation of the means of transport, correspondence and communication, of water-supply and electric power, and the organisation by Government enterprise of such technical undertakings as the country may require to safeguard the peace and happiness of the people.

(b) The creation of a national bank for the practical control of the finances of the country.

(c) The grant of a monopoly of all land, agricultural and other loans to the national bank in order that the people may be saved from the oppression of the money-lenders. The enactment of laws to punish those who extort exorbitant rates of interest.

(d) The imposition of a sliding-scale of taxation on all incomes and inheritances, so that the State may have the means necessary to enable it to carry out essential reforms.

(e) The reclamation of waste land and its distribution to the peasantry in order that they may directly enjoy its fruits, and the organisation of co-operative enterprise among these people.

(f) The building of model villages, the filling in of swamps, and the protection of the peasantry from the ill effects of marshes.

(g) The annulment of oppressive agricultural laws and customs and the enactment of laws to ensure the progress of agriculture, the welfare of the peasants and their protection from exploitation.

(h) The reduction of the salaries of highly paid officials and the just treatment of junior officials and employees.

4. Education.

To make elementary education compulsory; to stamp out illiteracy by the creation of institutions for culture and enlightenment - public libraries, cinemas, theatres, concert halls. The development of physical culture through special clubs, and assistance for the poor to continue their education through night schools.

5. Health.

(a) To ensure that first consideration is given to preventive medicine and that curative medicine receives second consideration. The general increase of health institutions in all parts of the country, and the increase of public gardens and of children's playgrounds.

(b) To build up healthy dwellings by the following means:-

(i) The planning of towns according to the principles of public health, the building of healthy dwellings and their lease at low rents to offers and soldiers, workmen and minor officials and those in need.

(ii) To combat intoxication, which harms the health of the public, and the encouragement of marriage.

6. The Workers.

The enactment of laws to protect the workers, to guarantee their rights, to ensure their progress and to restrict working hours to a maximum of eight hours a day. To encourage trade unions and workmen's organisations and to fix a minimum wage for workers of all kinds.

7. The Lives of the People.

(a) To enact laws in conformity with modern civilisation to regulate personal status.

(b) To endeavour to bring about the liberation of the women while at the same time preserving the principles of family life.

Appendix H

'Abd al-Fattah Ibrahim's letter to Ja'far Abu al-Timman, 16 January 1937

His Excellency Muhammad Ja'far Chalabi Abu al-Timman,

In spite of my knowledge of your preoccupation with your duties which are certainly more important than this letter, I find myself obliged to write to you not to defend myself, but to point out the truth.

I still believe that nothing requires me to defend my reputation which had been attacked by some persons, whom I was mistaken in thinking possessed manhood and courage. They have proved that they have no hesitation in using lies and falsehoods in order to conceal their poisonous selfishness which they dress up as sacrifices for the public good. They have excelled in pretending their good nature and honourable intentions,until they have succeeded in deceiving the most intelligent and experienced of men. Although I do not blame you for believing what they have attributed to me, your experience will have alas proved to you that the political arena is crowded with exploiters who make national struggle a market for speculating with the public interest and for gambling with the future of this wretched people. I could have answered their accusation without resorting to lies and fabrications. However my dignity and honour did not permit me to wage such an offensive, especially since I sensed that you seemed to have believed their lies. Thus I decided to conduct myself honourably, trusting that the mischief will only hurt its creator. But their wickedness has reached the point of having accused me and my wife of spying. I am certainly surprised that such an accusation could originate from individuals who have forgotten my services to them and who have allowed themselves to exploit the efforts of others for their own benefit. They have not defended a comrade who stood on their side for many years and who sacrificed a lot more than they did in intellectual and material terms and was largely responsible for creating the ideology which they have announced to the public as their own. But what hurts me most was that Your Excellency has tended to believe these lies which should disgust any man of integrity, for even if I disagreed with you, I do not have the slightest doubt of your sincerity in your beliefs and in your struggle to achieve what you believe to be just.

I do not wish to come back to work with these people or to prove my sincerity to Your Excellency, for these matters are of little importance. However I want to be free to expose these liars, because they are using your name in cheating the public. I will be guided by my conscience and I am sure that I will be doing my duty in serving the

public interest, in particular towards you personally, for there is no doubt that they are hiding behind Your Excellency and your well known patriotism to achieve their own personal ends. The excuse they gave for my leaving the Society was that I wanted promotion in the civil service, although they knew well that I have spent eight years as a secondary school teacher without being promoted. In fact other teachers who were appointed with me or after, even some of my own students, have been given positions of responsibility and have been promoted two or three grades. The only reason for my being passed over is my association with the group, and if I were seeking promotion I should not need to resort to unethical methods. I am ready to resign my job, for staying on in such a manner brings nothing to me but disgrace, and I am still waiting for an opportunity to get out of this painful situation.

Finally I wish to bring to Your Excellency's attention that the owner of al-Ahali newspaper refuses to pay what he owes me despite many requests. I insist that I shall not forego any amount, however little, to people who do not deserve either help or encouragement, that is why I wanted to bring the matter to your attention because I feared that I might otherwise be forced to gain my right by methods that you would disapprove and which might damage the reputation of the group.

I wish Your Excellency success in your efforts and I hope that you will not suffer personally from the behaviour of persons who do not deserve your confidence.

With respect,

'Abd al-Fattah

Iraqi National Archives
Ja'far Abu al-Timman's private papers
document No.51

Appendix I

al-Chadirchi's Proposals for the future utilisation of Oil Resources, March 1937

As Minister of Economics and Communications, Kamil al-Chadirch
submitted a secret report to the Council of Ministers
containing a well researched study entitled "the Oil Concessio
It dwelt on the previous agreements between the Iraqi Government and the oil companies and pointed out their unfairness and the oil companies' infringements on Iraq's rights. al-Chadirchi concluded his report with a recommendation to review all the previous agreements with the oil companies which "were unjust and to the disadvantage of Iraq's interests". He recommended the following alterations to the previous agreements:

" (a) A review of the long-term concessions.
(b) The participation of the Iraq Government in profit sharing with the IPC and Khaniqin Oil Co.
(c) Increasing the Iraq Government's share in the IPC to a minimum of £750,000.
(d) Putting a minimum limit on the Iraq Government's share in theKhaniqin Oil Company's capital and regulating the Company's extraction and importation of oil.
(e) A just distribution of the oil resource areas on the basis of geological surveys.
(f) The reduction of local oil prices, on the same basis as in Iran.
(g) The training of Iraqis in technical jobs by the oil companies, on the same lines as in Iran.
(h) The improvement of the position of the Iraqi director in London. He should be treated as a government representative and be allocated an office in the company's headquarters to keep in daily contact with the company. At the moment he only meets briefly once or twice a month with the company's other directors and cannot exert any pressure or influence on their decisions.

There are many other secondary points for review if the Council of Ministers approves these hasic recommendations and gives this Ministry the authority to negotiate with the oil companies. "

Kamil al-Chadirchi, Minister of Economics and Communications
Baghdad, 9 March 1937 No. S/221 Top Secret
Oil affairs Division. Ministry of Economics and Communications
(Kamil al-Chadirchi private papers)

Appendix J

The Resignation of the Reformist Ministers

To His Excellency the President of the Council of Ministers:

Whereas, it has been impossible to realize the aspirations of the nation on account of which we have sacrificed ourselves, hoping to give happiness, well-being and tranquility to the children of the country and to render justice to all;

Whereas, it has been likewise impossible to apply the wise and pacific measures which we had decided to take for the welfare and the stabilization of the country, measures which public opinion had welcomed unanimously and with satisfaction and whose good results were awaited by all;

Whereas, chance has willed that the contrary result should come to pass and that the blood of the children of the country should be spilled by processes which would have been hidden from us had they not been revealed as a result of the irritation of certain circles;

Whereas, finally the obstina cy in following, not without ostentation, the actual policy which is irreconcilable with that wise one which it is the duty of devoted men to follow has been observed;

Therefore, for the foregoing reasons, we no longer have any reason for sharing the responsibility and we present our resignations with our respect.

Ja'far Abul Timman,
Minister of Finance.

Saleh Jabar,
Minister of Justice.

Kamil el-Chadirchi,
Minister of Economics and Communications.

Yusuf Ibrahim,
Minister of Education.

Despatch No. 815 - Diplomatic,dated June 20, 1937, from American Legation, Baghdad, Iraq.

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Notes on Sources:

This work has been based on three main primary sources; archives, contemporary newspapers and other publications, and interviews with the founders of Jama'at al-Ahali and some of their contemporaries. The archives consist of British Foreign Office and Air Ministry papers on Iraq in the Public Record Office, London, the correspondence between the American Legation in Baghdad and the State Department in the United States National Archives in Washington, DC, and various archive deposits in Baghdad. Here the British archives are probably the most informative, but the American material has often given additional insights or alternative interpretations of the political situation which have been of considerable value. The most important Iraqi archive material is the collection of files on individuals, particularly the founders of Jama'at al-Ahali, in the General Security Office, Baghdad. These dossiers make it possible to construct a chronological history of the activities of the various individuals and the group as a whole, and has proved particularly useful in checking accounts given in interviews in the course of the research. In general, the material in the Iraqi National Archives still awaits indexing, which makes research into particular areas somewhat laborious.

In order to study the progress and development of Jama'at al-Ahali, it was felt to be essential to construct a complete run of the group's various newspapers for the period 1932-1946. Hitherto no complete series existed, but it has been possible to collect this material on microfilm, and a copy will be deposited in the British Library.

Other major publications of the group from the 1930s have been made available through the generosity of the founders, especially Mr Husain Jamil. The private papers and library of the late Kamil al-Chadirchi were made available through the kindness of his son, Mr Nasir al-Chadirchi. Mr 'Abd al-Fattah Ibrahim and Mr Husain Jamil also kindly gave access to their private libraries.

Since all the leading members of the group, with the exception of Kamil al-Chadirchi, are still alive it has been possible to interview them all at length at various times between 1975 and 1979. These interviews

have been of central importance to the study as a whole, and it is impossible for me to express adequate gratitude to Messrs Hadid, Ibrahim, Isma'il and Jamil for their assistance and their constant and friendly encouragement.

A number of other individuals also gave valuable assistance and interviews.

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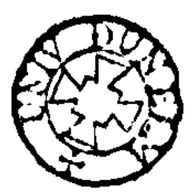
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