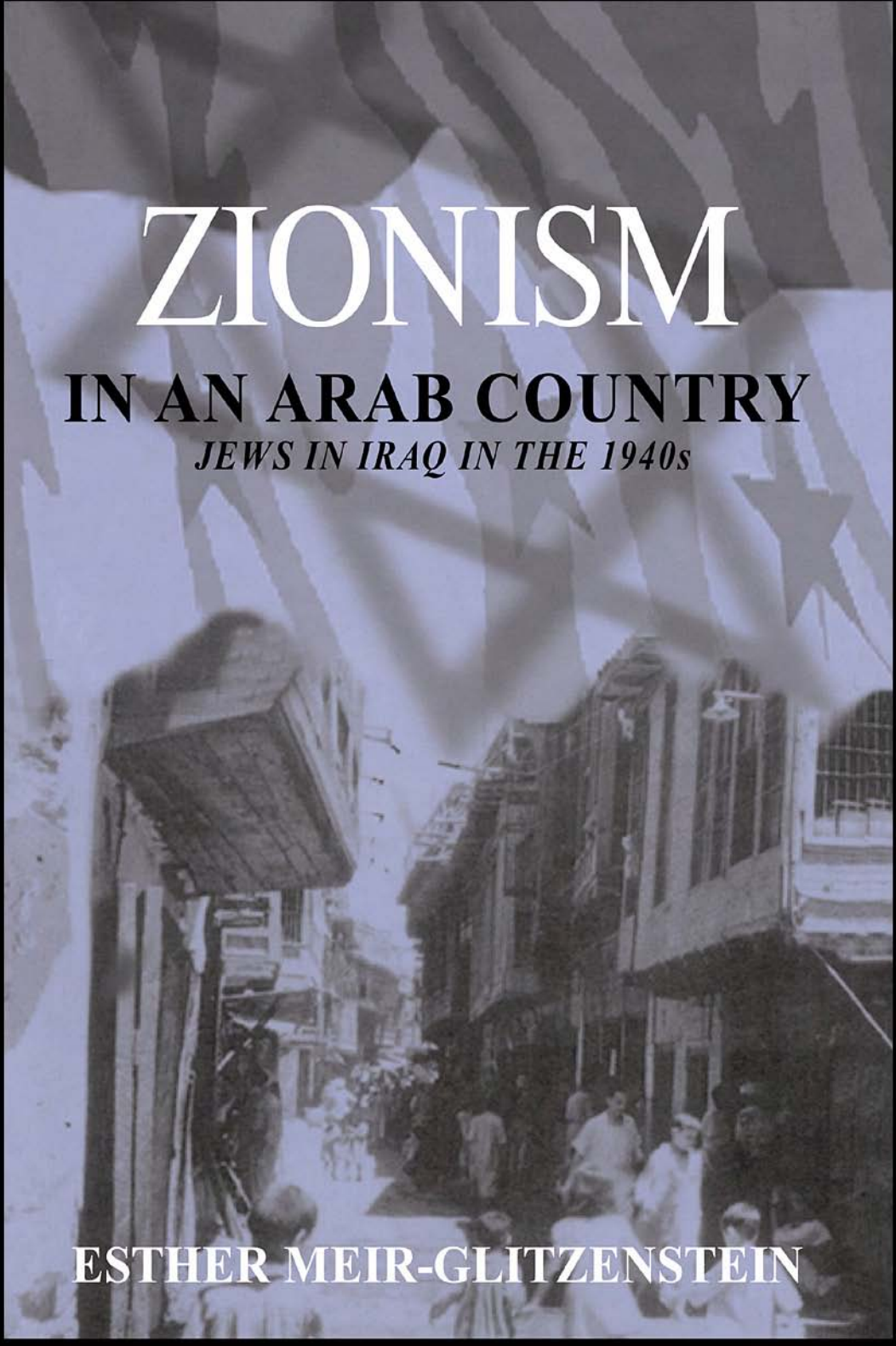

ZIONISM IN AN ARAB COUNTRY

Jews in Iraq in the 1940s

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ESTHER MEIR-GLITZENSTEIN

Foreword

ANITA SHAPIRA

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Dedicated with love to my mother, Tzivya née *Hacham, and my late father, Mordechai Glitzenstein*

Contents

Acknowledgements

The first version of this book was published in Hebrew by Am Oved Publishers and Tel Aviv University in 1993, and it was based on a doctoral dissertation written in Tel Aviv University under the supervision of Professor Anita Shapira. The changes that have occurred in Zionism historiography since the book was published, new research studies on Israel and the Jews in Islamic countries, my own recent research on the subject, and new insights that I have gained, prompted me to take another look at the book and at its structures and main theses. I changed the structure of the book, shortened it, added new chapters and updated it.

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List of Illustrations

All photographs are courtesy of the Babylonian Jewry Heritage Center, Or-Yehuda.

List of Abbreviations

BCE	Before Common Era
BJHC	Babylonian Jewry Heritage Centre
CID	Criminal Investigation Department
CZA	Central Zionist Archives/Jewish Agency Executive
DP	Displaced Person
FO	Foreign Office, London
IZL	The National Military Organization [Irgun Zvai Le'umi]
PRO	Public Records Office, London
UN	United Nations
UNSCOP	United Nations Special Committee on Palestine

Foreword

The story of Iraqi Jewry in the twentieth century is both typical and exceptional: on the one hand, the processes of modernization, Westernization, emigration and resettlement were the predominant features in Jewish life in that tumultuous century; on the other hand, the case of Iraqi Jewry is distinguished by the almost total uprooting undergone by that ancient community within an extremely short period of time. The whole process took less than ten years, from the shock waves created by the anti-Jewish pogrom, the 'Farhud' in summer 1941 to the mass emigration to Israel in 1950. The intensity of the events makes Iraqi Jewry a fitting case study for exploring and understanding similar processes in other countries in the Middle East and elsewhere that were affected by the rise of militant nationalism, which had repercussions on the status of religious and ethnic minority groups. The rejection of the Jews by the nationalist Iraqi society sparked an identity crisis and a search for an alternative to Iraqi nationalism, eventually leading them to embrace Zionist ideology and depart from their homeland to Israel.

The encounter between the Zionist establishment's desire to foster Jewish immigration to Palestine, and then to Israel, and the Iraqi Jews' quest for identity is the topic of this book. Based on primary sources—Zionist, Israeli, British—this is a sophisticated study that tells the story from the point of view of both the Iraqi Jewish community and the Zionist and Israeli institutions. It is an important and most welcome addition to the growing literature on the process of modernization experienced by Jews in Middle Eastern countries and its connection with European rule in those lands. It also demonstrates most vividly the ambiguities and inner contradictions inherent in Zionist ideology and practice: oscillating between two self-images—that of the saviour of Jews from persecution, which entailed their mass immigration, and that of a renaissance movement, aimed at creating a 'new Jew' and an ideal Jewish society, which entailed changing the immigrants and imposing upon them a foreign culture—the Zionist movement found itself acting at cross-purposes.

Seen from a contemporary perspective, the integration of Iraqi Jewry in Israeli society is a success story This, however, should not lead us to forget the mistakes that were made, the stereotypes that existed, and the pain inflicted by uprooting and resettlement. In this book, Esther Meir-Glitzenstein thus presents an ambiguous and multi-layered reality, as indeed history always is.

Anita Shapira
2003

Preface

The 1940s was a fateful time for Iraqi Jewry. Around the end of the period, from 1949 to 1951, more than 123,000 Jews left Iraq for Israel. The remainder, fewer than 10,000, left gradually; today only a few Jews remain.

This emigration was part of a more general wave of Jewish migration from Middle Eastern and North African countries to the West. The wave of migration began in the nineteenth century, most significantly with the migration of Syrian Jews to South America, and culminated after World War II with mass emigration from Egypt, Iran, Yemen, Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Libya and Iraq.

The mass aliyah from Iraq is a unique case, however, unlike other migrations in the modern age and unlike the other elements of the mass immigration to Israel in the early 1950s. First of all, it differs in terms of its extent—more than 90 per cent of the community. The orderly, organized migration of an entire minority group—young and old, rich and poor—within a very short period of time, without coercion and without being a planned deportation, is extraordinary Moreover, it put an end to a community that had existed continuously for more than 2,600 years, since the exile of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah to Assyria and Babylonia in the sixth century BCE. Iraqi Jewry was involved extensively in the Iraqi economy, society and culture and was considered to be one of the wealthiest Jewish communities in the Middle East. But this community suffered financially as a result of its displacement and aliyah more than any of the other groups of immigrants that arrived in Israel in the early years of the state.

Many people have attempted to understand this unique case. The Zionist school of thought explained it in terms of a combination of the influences of Zionist ideology and religious-messianic faith on the one hand and mounting antisemitism and political persecution on the other. This approach linked Zionist activity and aliyah and explained the latter as an achievement of the Zionist movement in Iraq.[1]

The anti-Zionist approach, too, attributed the aliyah to the Zionist movement but explained it as resulting not from the ideological and political attraction of Zionism but from propaganda, and even terrorism, by Israeli agents, who allegedly threw grenades at Jewish centres and killed and wounded several people, thereby creating panic and prompting the panicked Iraqi Jews to flee to the only destination that was available to them—Israel. One of the originators of this approach, the Palestinian scholar Abbas Shiblak, even argued that a conspiracy between the Israeli and Iraqi governments left the Jews no choice but to emigrate to Israel.[2]

The assumption that these factors are sufficient for explaining the mass aliyah from Iraq is misleading. Both approaches are ideologically biased, generalized, simplistic views that ignore the complexity of the various processes that operated in the Iraqi Jewish community, Iraqi society, and the Middle East in general. After all, the mass emigration from Iraq was just the culmination or conclusion of a series of developments that resulted

from the modernization and westernization of the Middle East, the rise of Arab national movements and the Zionist-Arab conflict over Palestine.

The purpose of this book is to explore the relations between the Zionist establishment in Palestine/Israel and the Jewish community in Iraq. This relationship centred on two organizations: Hehalutz and the Haganah. By reviewing the activity of these organizations we examine the decade that preceded the mass aliyah, paying attention to the political, societal, economic and cultural developments that shaped the history of Iraqi Jewry during this period.

These developments include the following:

1. Changes in the legal status of the Jews of Iraq in the twentieth century and their relations with the Iraqi authorities and with the British, who unofficially ruled Iraq at the time;
2. The relations between the Jewish minority and the Muslim-Arab majority in Iraq, in the context of the rise of the local national movement, its struggle against British colonialism and its efforts to lay the foundations of an Iraqi nation;
3. Struggles within the Jewish community between different segments of society, political groups and ideologies regarding the Jewish orientation that was needed at the time;
4. The relationship between the Zionist establishment and Iraqi Jewry, changes in this relationship in the 1940s and its operative ramifications;
5. The characteristics and evolution of the Zionist movement in Iraq in the 1940s, its status in the Jewish community and its role during the mass aliyah from Iraq;
6. The Haganah in Iraq and the dilemmas entailed by its existence.

As mentioned above, the sphere of Zionist activity is the focus of this book. Through it we will delve into the basic problems that shaped both the development of Iraqi Jewry in the 1940s and the policy of the Zionist establishment, which, in the late 1940s, led to the mass aliyah. Chronologically speaking, the study is limited to the ten-year period from 1941 to 1951. It begins with the riots against the Jews of Baghdad in June 1941, which traumatized Iraqi Jewry and even affected the Jewish community in Palestine. The riots called the attention of the Zionist establishment in Palestine, for the first time, to the deteriorating status of the Jews in Islamic countries and were one of the impetuses for the start of Zionist missions to Iraq. The subject ends with the law that formally froze but actually confiscated Jewish assets; this law, enacted by the Iraqi government in March 1951, towards the end of the mass aliyah from Iraq, turned the emigration into a deportation.

The most important and most significant event in this decade was the establishment of the State of Israel in May 1948. This event is the dividing line between the two sub-periods in the study. For the first part, the book describes and analyses the stages in the development and spread of the Zionist movement among Iraqi Jewish communities until May 1948. The second part is devoted to an analysis of political developments after May 1948 and the sequence of events that led the community to aliyah, paying attention to the main research question: Was the Zionist movement indeed responsible for the aliyah of Iraqi Jewry, as the Zionist and anti-Zionist explanations would have it, or might there be—as I shall demonstrate in this study—a different, more complex explanation?

For the most part, the sources that I used are archival documents, especially the minutes of meetings of the leadership institutions in the Yishuv and the State of Israel: the Jewish Agency Executive (Central Zionist Archives—CZA), the Histadrut executive committee (Labor Movement Archives), Mapai institutions (Labor Party Archives), and institutions of Hakibbutz Hameuhad (Hakibbutz Hameuhad Archives). The abundant, detailed correspondence between the emissaries and the Mossad Le-Aliyah Bet (Haganah Archives) was an unflagging source of documentation on Zionist activity together with the files of the Aliyah Department, the Political Department and other departments of the CZA and files from the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs (State Archives).

Although this material formed the main basis for the study of Zionist activity in Iraq, the fact that it came from the establishment presented complex methodological problems because it reflected the ideological, social and cultural views of the Yishuv emissaries. True, the emissaries fulfilled a paramount function, but the burden of Zionist activity was borne by the hundreds of local members of the Zionist movement, and especially the counsellors and committee members. Consequently describing Zionist activity through the prism of the emissaries' reports distorts it. This awareness, which is essential for discovering the roles and attitudes of the members of the movement, is achieved through a critical reading of the emissaries' reports and by comparing this information with that obtained from memoirs and oral documentation.

I also used the reports of the British Embassy in Baghdad and its correspondence with the Foreign Office regarding Iraqi Jewry (located in the Public Record Office—PRO). Although the Zionist sources were the main foundation of this study, which is primarily an exploration of internal relations within the Zionist movement—between the centre in Palestine and its branch in Iraq—for this very reason the British sources were of great importance in elucidating the state of the Jewish community in Iraq from a different, non-Zionist, and sometimes even anti-Zionist perspective. By comparing the British views and assessments with the Israeli ones, we can come up with more comprehensive and more complex criteria for analysing the situation of Iraqi Jewry

It should be noted that the Iraqi sources on Iraqi Jewry, which presumably still exist, are locked up in the Iraqi government archives. Whatever information we have about the Iraqi perspective comes second-hand: from reports by the British ambassador in Baghdad, information that reached the emissaries, or accounts in the contemporary press.

I made only sparse use of oral interviews in this study despite scores of interviews and conversations that I had with Zionist emissaries and activists. Usually, documentary material gives a clearer and more reliable picture than the interviews do. I used interviews to support conclusions that I reached based on the archival material or to criticize the establishment reports if they contradicted the opinions of the interviewees.

The terminology used in research studies and memoirs about Zionist activity in Iraq is not standard. The following should clarify some of the terms used in this work:

Zionist activity in Iraq encompassed three spheres: education, the Haganah, and the system of legal and illegal aliyah. The educational activity was conducted by the Hehalutz movement and its offshoot, Hehalutz Hatza'ir. Because no other Zionist movements were active there, the terms 'Zionist movement' and 'the movement' refer to Hehalutz. I use the terms 'Zionist activity' and 'Zionist underground' to refer to the overall activity of the emissaries from Palestine.

NOTES

1. See Shlomo Hillel, ‘Ha-mahalakhim she-holidu et ha-aliyah ha-hamonit me-Iraq’ [The processes that gave rise to the mass aliyah from Iraq], in Zvi Yehuda (ed.), *Mi-Bavel li-Yerushalayim* [From Babylonia to Jerusalem] (Tel Aviv: 1980), p. 36; Mordechai Ben-Porat, *Le-Baghdad ve-hazara* [To Baghdad and Back] (Or Yehuda: Ma’ariv, 1996), p. 153; Dafna Zimhoni, ‘Madua alu rov yehudei Iraq le-Yisrael be-mivtza Ezra ve-Nehemiah’ [Why did most of Iraqi Jewry immigrate to Israel in Operation Ezra and Nehemiah?], in Pinhas Ginossar (ed.), *Iyyunim bi-tequmat Yisrael* [Studies in the Rebirth of Israel] (Sede Boqer: 1991), pp. 401–2.
2. Abbas Shiblak, *The Lure of Zion: The Case of the Iraqi Jews* (London: Al Saki Books, 1986), p. 119; on this school of thought, see ch. 11.

Introduction

The Evolution of the Iraqi Jewish Community in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries

Until World War I, Baghdad, Basra and Mosul were three administrative districts *(vilayets)* on the eastern edge of the Ottoman Empire. The region was considered remote and backward, but it began to change in the mid-nineteenth century, when the Ottoman authorities strengthened their hold on it and took steps to improve administration, increase centralization, and bolster relations between Baghdad and Constantinople. The changes came in response to involvement by the European powers in the Middle East, and particularly in the Persian Gulf, using local allies and agents to acquire strongholds in the region and to prevent their rivals from achieving positions of dominance. Britain in particular regarded the Persian Gulf area as a strategic asset because it was located on the way to the British Empire in India. News of oil fields in northern Iraq further increased the interest of the European powers.

The changes first became evident in Iraq in the 1860s, when communications and transportation between Iraq and the Far East were enhanced by the opening of the Suez Canal (1869) and improvements in steamboat travel on the Euphrates and Tigris rivers. Meanwhile, the Ottoman rulers attempted to institute various domestic administrative reforms. After the Suez Canal was opened and the international trade route shifted from Aleppo-Mosul to the port city of Basra, the population of Basra began to grow. Jews also began to settle in new towns founded around this time—Amara, Qal'at-Salih, and other places in southern Iraq—although most Jews lived in the three main cities: Mosul in the north, Baghdad in the centre, and Basra in the south.

These changes exerted a major influence on Iraqi Jewry, moulding the community into the form it had in the twentieth century. The processes of change were shaped by four main factors: the policies of the Ottoman government; the specific traits of the Jewish community; increased British influence; and finally, the influence of world Jewry.

IRAQI JEWRY AND THE CHALLENGE OF WESTERNIZATION

Modernization in the Jewish community occurred in concert with the westernization and modernization policy of the Ottoman Empire, as reflected in reform legislation (the *Tanzimat*) enacted in the mid-nineteenth century.[1] These reforms established the principles of protection of life and property and of equal rights for all subjects of the empire, irrespective of their religious affiliation. Nevertheless, the Jews retained their status as a *millet*, that is, a religious community that enjoyed internal religious and educational autonomy The poll tax paid by minorities was abolished and minorities became eligible for military service, although they could obtain an exemption by paying a special tax.

In 1849 a *hakham bashi* (a cleric who served as head of the entire Jewish community and represented it vis-à-vis the authorities) was appointed for Baghdad.[2] In addition to the *hakham bashi* there were two councils: the spiritual council *(al-majlis al-ruhani),* which comprised seven rabbis and dealt with religious issues; and the secular council *(al-majlis al-jismani),* made up of a chairman and eight dignitaries, which was in charge of administrative and financial matters.

This was the official leadership of the Jewish community. However, the real leadership, policymaking, decision-making on important issues, and conduct of relations with the local government and the central government in Constantinople were in the hands of a small group of wealthy dignitaries who derived their power from their relations with the ruling Muslim elite and not necessarily from authority conferred upon them directly by the community institutions.[3] These men were landowners, merchants engaged in international trade, and bankers. Many of them had a broad education, and some sent their sons to western institutions of higher learning in the Middle East and Europe. These were the people who represented the Jewish community in its dealings with the authorities, partially funded religious and educational activity helped to provide for the needy and to finance the construction of public buildings, and served as esteemed role models for the community Most of them had banking and commercial connections with businesses set up by Iraqi Jewish émigrés in India and Britain.

The initial ties between Iraqi Jewry and the British were formed in the colonial empire in India, with assistance from the Baghdadi Jews there. Iraqi Jews first settled in India in the early nineteenth century, and they founded rich, influential communities in Bombay and Calcutta.[4] From there some went on to the Far East and even to Great Britain. This migration led to ramified commercial relations between Jewish merchants in Baghdad and Basra and British and Jewish companies in India. Through their connections with India, the Jews were gradually exposed to western culture and came to appreciate its financial and administrative advantages. They were especially aware of the political and economic importance of learning English and French.

Against this backdrop came a request from members of the Jewish community of Baghdad to the Alliance Israélite Universelle in Paris for a modern Jewish school in the city.[5] The school was founded in 1864; by World War I another 14 schools for boys and girls had been opened in various parts of Iraq (five in Baghdad, three in Basra, two in Mosul, two in Hilla, and one each in Kirkuk, Khanaqin, and Amara). The curriculum was set by the Alliance administration and was typical of the organization's schools at the time. At first some of the community leaders, including rabbis, voiced criticism of—and even opposition to—the new schools, primarily because the subject matter taught and the teachers' behaviour violated custom and traditional values. But the opposition died down by the turn of the century both because Jewish society had become more receptive to change and because the Jewish community had gradually obtained more control over the subject matter and the selection of teachers. Both of these factors peaked in the 1920s. During the British Mandate in Iraq, the Jewish communities in the various cities took over complete control of the schools, and the communities' school committees determined the curriculum in the Alliance schools and in the other Jewish schools, in keeping with the general Iraqi curriculum. These features of the Jewish educational system in Iraq enabled community members to obtain a modern education and skills that would prepare them for modern life. The Jewish leadership retained influence over the

subject matter and preserved what it considered to be fundamental cultural and traditional values.

This local control was possible because the Alliance had only limited influence in Iraq. European occupation did not begin until World War I, and even then it was the British and not the French who occupied the country As a result, the Alliance did not have the protection and assistance of the local government, whether Ottoman or British, as it had in the French colonies in North Africa. The Jewish community, in contrast, was backed by the Ottoman authorities.

The community continued to act autonomously. Unlike the case of Jewish communities in French colonies, its sources of power did not suffer and its institutions were not abolished or emptied of all content. The leadership, coming from the wealthy, educated elite, manoeuvred the community toward education and modernization, making the welfare of the community its top priority. The leaders strove to effect social and educational improvements in a conservative, gradual fashion, avoiding shocks and ensuring that the improvements encompassed the entire community as far as possible, including the poor, who in the early twentieth century constituted the majority of Jewish society. Because these leaders ascribed so much importance to education, a majority of the community budget was used for the Jewish schools. The community as a whole was sufficiently well organized and affluent to fund education. The money came from tuition payments by the students' parents on a sliding scale, community taxes (especially the *gabille,* a tax on kosher meat), and donations by Iraqi tycoons in the Far East, supplemented by a small amount of aid from the Alliance and the Anglo-Jewish Association.

The British occupation of Iraq during World War I introduced a colonial regime similar to that in other Muslim countries in the Middle East and North Africa, but it had little power to effect change. In Iraq the occupation began later than it did in Egypt and other parts of North Africa, and it was bound by international restrictions imposed by mandatory law, including an obligation to develop the country and groom it for independence. Moreover, the British were dealing with a post-traditional society that was already somewhat modernized. In addition, the growing influence of the Iraqi national movement heralded the age of decolonialization in Iraq. Under pressure from the national movement, direct British rule in Iraq lasted a very short time—just a decade. These factors limited direct British influence on society, the economy, and culture, and the Iraqi Jewish leadership consequently had more room to manoeuvre autonomously

CHANGES IN THE STATUS OF IRAQI JEWRY IN THE 1920S AND 1930S

The Jewish community welcomed the British occupation of Iraq, unlike the Muslims, who wanted independence and were therefore hostile to the new administration. The Jews were grateful to the British for rescuing them from Ottoman abuse during World War I, and the prospect of an independent Arab government worried them due to the tension between them and the Muslim majority in the pre-war years.[6] The Jews expected the British to enhance security throughout Iraq and to create conditions that would promote commerce and economic prosperity. They also believed that they would attain equal civil

and political rights. Indeed, after suppressing a popular rebellion that broke out in 1920, the British relied for support on minority groups—the Kurds in the north, the Assyrians on the Syrian border, and the Christians and Jews in the major cities—as well as on some Sunni dignitaries in the cities and the Shi'ite Bedouin sheikhs in the rural areas.[7]

When the British Mandate began in 1920, the British installed Faisal, son of the Sharif of Mecca, as king; Faisal had recently been expelled from Syria by the French. It was clear to the Jews that this constitutional monarchy was the closest they could get to direct British rule, and therefore they accepted it, collaborated in establishing the new state, and even formed ties with the King and the Hashemite royal house. The Anglo- Iraqi Treaty of 1922 and the Iraqi constitution enacted in 1924 guaranteed equality before the law irrespective of race and creed, and even specified the rights of minorities in such a way as to preserve their religious and cultural character.[8] The period of British rule is remembered by Iraqi Jewry as a golden age in all areas of life: demography, politics, the economy, society and culture.

The data from local censuses indicate rapid natural increase among the Jews.[9] The census carried out by the British occupation authorities in 1919 estimated the Iraqi Jewish population at 87,000, or 3.1 per cent of the total population of 2.8 million. In Kurdistan—the mountainous region of northern Iraq—there were 14,000 Jews, mostly in the cities of Mosul (7,000) and Kirkuk and in small villages nearby. The rest of the Jews, known as Babylonians, were concentrated in the capital, Baghdad (50,000), where they constituted about 20 per cent of the total population of the city. The rest lived in the southern port city of Basra (7,000) and in dozens of small towns and villages in the various provinces.

By the late 1940s, 30 years after the British took over, the Jewish population had increased by about 35 per cent. According to the 1947 census, there were 118,000 Jews in Iraq, equal to 2.6 per cent of the total population of 4.5 million. Some 77,000 Jews lived in Baghdad and 10,000 in Basra. Close to 20,000 Jews lived in Kurdistan. It should be noted that these censuses were not entirely accurate. Based on Israeli data on immigration in the 1950s and the number of Jews who remained in Iraq, the Jewish population in the late 1940s should be estimated at close to 135,000. The rapid demographic growth in the Jewish community was the result of improved sanitation and medical care and a rise in the standard of living.

Changes were also seen in other areas. Under the British occupation, following the stabilization of order and security, Iraqi Jewry became geographically more dispersed. Jews settled in villages and small towns throughout the country, where they worked in commerce and as middlemen. Within the cities, many people moved from the Jewish quarter to Muslim neighbourhoods, where housing conditions were better. By this point most of the Jews already lived in urban settings; the economic development of the 1920s and 1930s accelerated Jewish migration from the villages and small towns in the provinces to the cities, thereby boosting the concentration of Jews in the capital.[10]

The occupational structure also changed. In the nineteenth century the Jews had worked mainly as artisans, peddlers, small merchants, retailers and moneylenders; in Kurdistan they also worked in agriculture. The vast majority were poor, although, as stated earlier, there was a small affluent class comprising money-changers, capitalists, and merchants engaged in international trade, especially imports. By the beginning of World War I, the vast majority of imports were handled by companies owned by local Jews. During the reign of King Faisal (1921–1933), the political system was opened up to

Jewish men, and Jews were represented in both houses of parliament in proportion to their share of the population. They were also let into the Civil Service. Whereas few Jews had worked in the Civil Service during the Ottoman era because of their inferior religious and social status as *dhimmi*,[11] they were now given preference by the British Mandatory authorities due to their loyalty and their qualifications: modern education and knowledge of English. Many were hired by the ministries of Finance, Justice, Transportation and Public Works. Two people held especially high-ranking positions: Sasson Yehezkel (later Sir Ezekiel Sassoon), the finance minister in the first half of the 1920s; and Abraham el-Kabir, who served as director-general of the Finance Ministry for about 20 years until 1948. Other Jews worked in management of the railroads, customs office and postal and telegraph systems—sensitive, strategic assets that guaranteed British interests in Iraq. A large number of Jews worked in private businesses, especially oil companies and banks, and in the liberal professions—as judges, lawyers, doctors, pharmacists, and so on. As an indication of the extent of this change, in the late 1940s clerks, civil servants, managers and members of the liberal professions accounted for 25 per cent of all employed Jews.[12]

Jewish merchants, too, prospered under the Mandate. They supplied food and equipment to the army and expanded their commercial ties with countries in the British Empire. The rapid economic development in Iraq contributed to an increase in exports, diversification of imports, and the flourishing of the financial system, in which Jewish banks and money-changers (known as *sarafs*) played a central role.[13] A picturesque description by Salman Shina, an attorney newspaper editor, and later member of parliament, illustrates the rapidity of this process: 'Commerce blossomed and flourished, the Jews made fortunes, and gold descended upon them like rain on the grass.'[14]

The changes were also evident in the education of Jewish children. In the 1949/50 school year, just before the mass emigration to Israel, more than 18, 000 Jewish pupils, about one third of them girls, were enrolled in schools in Iraq. The illiteracy rate among men was low, and most of the illiterate men lived in Kurdistan. A significant percentage of young people had a high-school education. Hundreds had post-secondary education, having attended universities in Lebanon, Egypt or western Europe, or enrolled since the 1920s in the institutions of higher education that were established in Baghdad. A significant change occurred in the education of women, too; there were even some young women who had attended universities abroad.[15]

All of these processes continued after the end of the British Mandate and the establishment of an independent Iraqi state in 1932. But now a new generation of educated, middle-class Sunni Muslims had begun to demand the restoration of the dominant status they had had under Ottoman rule. These young people were the proponents of the Iraqi national movement that had been born in the 1920s and strove to rout British colonialism. They identified the Jewish minority with colonialism, since the colonial regime had relied on and been benevolent to the minorities. The educated young people also regarded Jews in prominent Civil Service positions as rivals who had overstepped the bounds of the limited, inferior status conferred upon them by Islam. Under these circumstances, socioeconomic trends merged with ideology and a political struggle. In the 1930s the nationalists became the leading camp in Iraq. For the Jews, the 1930s marked the beginning of the reversal of the social and economic gains they had made in the 1920s: there were widespread dismissals from Civil Service jobs, a decrease in the hiring of new workers, and restrictions on Jewish university enrolment. Anti-

Jewish sentiment increased and antisemitic arguments were voiced under the influence of Nazi Germany This trend reached its peak in the Farhud—the riots of June 1941 in Baghdad—which will be discussed in the first chapter.

ZIONIST ACTIVITY IN IRAQ BETWEEN THE WORLD WARS

The founding of the Zionist movement in Europe in the late nineteenth century led to an awakening among Jewish intellectuals, and in the 1920s there were several Zionist organizations in Iraq. These organizations maintained social clubs in which members studied modern Hebrew, read Hebrew books and newspapers, held conversations and discussions, and participated in sports. Relations between the Iraqi Zionist organizations and the worldwide Zionist movement were limited to the collection of funds and distribution of a few dozen certificates for immigration to Palestine. The most important of the Zionist activists was Aharon Sasson, known as 'the Teacher', who headed Zionist activity in Iraq until the mid-1930s, when he was deported by the authorities and went to Palestine. Several thousand Iraqi immigrants moved to Palestine in the 1920s and 1930s, the vast majority of them illegally and without any assistance from the Zionist movement.[16]

In the first half of the 1930s, some Jews from Palestine who were working as teachers in Iraq conducted Zionist activity in Baghdad and steered youngsters in the direction of socialist Zionism. The activity took place through an organization by the name of Ahiever, and a group of these youngsters even moved to Palestine and joined rural settlements. The organization ceased to function after it was discovered by the Iraqi authorities.

The Zionist activists came from the lower middle class, and most of them were on the border between Jewish tradition and modernity. They came together in a local initiative that reflected increased westernization and education in the Jewish community. Their activity might also be viewed as a means of achieving social and political mobility within the conservative social framework of the community, whose leadership was controlled by a closed oligarchy However, as educated Jews became more and more involved in Iraqi Arab society, they grew away from Zionism. Moreover, this was a time of emancipation, when the Jews were obtaining full equal rights: the Civil Service was opened up to them and commercial options expanded immeasurably The Jewish problem in the national sense did not yet exist in Iraq, and the Jews did not need a Zionist solution. The local Zionist activists were motivated not by the distress of exile but by love of Zion. But in the mid-1930s, when the Iraqi government began to express its opposition to Zionist activity clearly and vehemently, deported the teachers who had come from Palestine, and even expelled Aharon Sasson, Zionist activity ceased.

NOTES

1. On the *Tanzimat,* see R.H.Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire 1856–1876* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963), pp. 60–103.
2. On the office of the *hakham bashi* in the Ottoman Empire, see Bernard Lewis, *The Jews of Islam* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984).

3. Elie Kedouri, ‘The Jews of Baghdad in 1910’, *Middle Eastern Studies* (October 1971), p. 358. The article is based on a memo written by a Jewish dragoman, Aharon David Shohet, at the request of the British consul.
4. On the Baghdadi Jewish community in India, see Joan Roland, *Jews in British India* (Hanover: Brandeis University Press, 1989).
5. On the modern schools in Iraq, see M.Sawdayee, *The Baghdad Connection* (n.p.: 1991).
6. Nissim Kazzaz, *Ha-yehudim be-Iraq ba-me’a ha-esrim* [The Jews in Iraq in the Twentieth Century] (Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 1991), pp. 40–52.
7. Peter Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq, 1914–1932* (Oxford: Ithaca Press, 1976), p. 21.
8. J.C.Hurewitz, *The Middle East and North Africa in World Politics* (New Haven: 1975), pp. 310–312.
9. For census data, see Kazzaz, *Ha-yehudim be-Iraq*, pp. 24–33.
10. Abraham el-Kabir, ‘My Communal Life, or Death of a Community’, manuscript (1964), pp. 113–14.
11. M.Maoz, ‘Temurot be-ma’amadam shel ha-yehudim ba-imperia ha-othmanit’ [Changes in the status of the Jews in the Ottoman Empire], *Mi-qedem u-mi-yam* (Haifa: 1980/81), pp. 17–19.
12. Hayyim J.Cohen, ‘A Note of Social Change among Iraqi Jews, 1917–1951’, *Jewish Journal of Sociology* 8:2 (December 1966).
13. Until World War II, Jews controlled 95% of imports and 10% of exports and had almost exclusive control of finance (Kazzaz, *Ha-yehudim be-Iraq*, pp. 93–110).
14. Salman Shina, *Mi-Bavel le-Tziyyon: Zikhronot ve-hashqafot* [From Babylonia to Zion: Memories and Outlooks] (Tel Aviv: n.p., 1955), p. 117.
15. Sylvia G.Haim, ‘Aspects of Jewish Life in Baghdad under the Monarchy’, *Middle Eastern Studies* 12 (May 1976), pp. 188–208.
16. Hayyim Cohen, *Ha-pe’ilut ha-tziyyonit be-Iraq* [Zionist Activity in Iraq] (Jerusalem: The Zionist Library and The Hebrew University, 1968/69).

Part I
ZIONISM IN IRAQ, 1941–1949

1
Relations between the Jews, British and Arabs in Iraq in the 1940s

THE FARHUD

In the spring of 1941, Britain was going through one of its roughest times in World War II. Most of Europe had fallen to the Axis forces, British cities were being bombed in the Blitz, and British ships were being attacked by the German fleet. The Afrika Korps under Rommel controlled most of North Africa and was stopped at the Egyptian border. The British had taken a severe beating in Greece and Crete, and their chances of winning the war appeared slim. Britain was also doing poorly in its sphere of control and influence in the Middle East. The Vichy government had been in control of Syria and Lebanon since June 1940, and in Egypt the pro-Fascist element in the administration was dominant. In Iraq a military coup took place on 2 April 1941,[1] led by Rashid Ali al-Gailani, an anti-British nationalist politician from one of the leading families in Baghdad. He was joined by four high-ranking army officers (the 'Golden Square') and the mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin al-Husseini, who, since arriving in Baghdad in October 1939, had been at the forefront of anti-British activity. The supporters of the British, headed by the regent, Abd al-Ilah, and Nuri al-Said, fled to Transjordan, and a pro-German government was formed in Iraq that sought an Axis victory and hoped for national and political achievements that it had been unable to obtain under the British.

The British, concerned that Iraq would become a pro-Nazi bridge-head in the Middle East and that other Arab countries would follow suit, decided to occupy the country. They were also trying to protect their strategic assets: the communications and transportation routes to India and the oil wells. Army units from India landed in Basra and Arab Legion troops came from Transjordan, and together they encircled Baghdad in a pincer movement. By late May the occupation was complete. On 1 June, the regent and his entourage returned to the capital, and that afternoon riots broke out against the Jews of Baghdad. The Farhud, as the bloodshed against Baghdad Jewry was known, lasted two days (1–2 June 1941); during that time, more than 150 Jews were murdered and more than 600 wounded. Some 1,500 stores and homes were looted, and 2,500 people—15 per cent of the Jews of Baghdad—were harmed, either physically or materially. The rioters were led by defeated Iraqi soldiers, rightwing youths and policemen; many Baghdad residents and Bedouin from the vicinity thronged to the city to share in the booty, and they, too, took part in the violence.[2] The immediate reaction among the Jews was a desire to leave Iraq. Hundreds fled to Iran, others went to Beirut, and a few received visas for India. But their visas soon expired, and most of the emigrants returned to Baghdad,[3] especially when it became clear that the political situation had quietened down and the

Iraqi economy was prospering. A few hundred Jews tried to reach Palestine, but most of them stopped at some point on the way

The material rehabilitation of the community was rapid, especially due to the prosperity that accompanied the British occupation. In addition, relatives, wealthy local Jews, and Iraqi Jewish émigrés helped the victims; the Va'ad Leummi (National Council of Jews in Palestine) sent a symbolic donation; and the Iraqi government paid compensation to the victims in the sum of 20,000 dinars. But the community was not only suffering from harm to persons and property; it was also in a state of profound shock that undermined its sense of security and stability and prompted the Jews to question whether they really belonged to the society and land where they had lived and worked for generations.

The political orientation of the Jewish elite, which sought integration in Iraqi society and culture and collaborated with the regime, was now also uncertain. The Jewish leadership—Rabbi Sasson Kadoorie, the community president; members of parliament and the Senate; members of the secular and spiritual councils; high-ranking officials and prominent attorneys; and dignitaries and wealthy members of the community—faced a difficult dilemma. The Farhud had shown how intensely the Jews were hated by the Muslim right, as well as the reason for this: the Jews were identified with the informal British colonialism and its Iraqi puppet regime. It was clear that the Jewish leadership's policy of collaboration had put the Jews on the side of a hated political camp that had only a narrow base of social support and was fearful of the growing strength of the opposition, which had broad popular support. However, the Jewish leaders saw no alternative. They themselves were part of the regime. They held public office, were prominent in economic life and had friendly relations with politicians and leaders. The national movement's hostility toward the Jews only increased their dependence on the regime.[4] They therefore chose to ignore the dilemma and conceal the existence of the Jewish problem. They opposed any step within the community that they thought might stir up hostility and make things worse for the Jews, and they preferred quiet, personal, indirect diplomacy to demonstrative public activity The Jews in parliament adopted the same policy: they never voted against the Iraqi government and never came out in defence of the rights of the Jewish minority.[5]

The intelligentsia from the upper and upper-middle classes also faced a profound political and cultural crisis. Educated and wealthy, many of them journalists, authors and poets, they had considered themselves partners in creating the culture of the Iraqi nation, and now they felt rejected and betrayed. Their faith in the prospect of integration in society had suffered a severe shock.

The most profound crisis was among the youth. The bloodshed prompted many of them to turn their backs on the traditional leadership and its conservative policy and to seek a radical solution to the Jewish problem in Iraq. The revolutionary fervour of youth led in two different directions: the Jewish national direction, which took them to the Zionist movement; and the socialist direction, which brought them to the Communist Party. The former sought the solution in Palestine, whereas the latter maintained that the victory of socialism in Iraq, and a change in the social order, would also solve the Jewish problem. Other young people who did not identify with either camp sought to emigrate to western countries: the United States, England, France, Canada and elsewhere. Meanwhile, a few groups of young people formed self-defence organizations, and many

other people tried to obtain arms.[6] Overall, the Farhud made the Jews anxious about the future and constantly fearful of any change that could harm them: victories by Axis troops, violence in Palestine, the growing strength of the Iraqi opposition, the departure of the British, and so on. In this respect the Farhud can be seen as the start of a new era in the history of Iraqi Jewry, the beginning of a crisis charac terized by a sense of physical danger to Jewish survival.

All these effects made the Farhud a milestone in the attitude of the Yishuv (the Jewish community of Palestine) toward Iraqi Jewry and the harbinger of a change in its attitude toward the Jews of Islamic countries (see chapter 2). The riots were the watershed between past and future for Iraqi Jewry and for its relationship with the Yishuv establishment.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PROBLEMS IN IRAQ

After occupying Iraq and reinstating the monarchy, the British wanted political and social tranquillity so that they could turn their attention to the world war, while protecting their strategic and military interests: oil, overland and air transportation routes, upkeep of the army and the transfer of aid to the USSR via Iraq and Iran. The first months of the occupation were characterized by a conciliatory policy vis-à-vis the rebels. A change occurred in October 1941, when Nuri al-Said, an ardent supporter of the British who was hated by the general public, became prime minister. Supporters of the Nazis were jailed or exiled, the escaped leaders of the coup were tried *in absentia* and given harsh sentences, and Iraq declared war on Germany. Domestically, Nuri had to stabilize his regime; he took advantage of the emergency laws that had been enacted in Iraq following the suppression of the revolt and barred all organizing by the opposition. The British victory at el-Alamein (November 1942) and the elimination of the German threat to the Middle East, along with the evaporation of the hopes of the pro-Nazi nationalists, helped to stabilize Nuri's regime. However, he was faced with pressing domestic problems that he had difficulty solving—fundamental problems of the Iraqi state that had become worse in the 1940s.[7]

The main problem was ethnic—specifically, the many conflicts between the three main ethnic groups: The Shiites (about half the population) were a rural population that sought political representation and were pulling in the direction of a pro-Iranian orientation. The Kurds (about 15 per cent) were demanding national autonomy in the oil-rich north (and had rebelled against the central government in 1943–1945). The Sunnis (about 20 per cent) were the ruling minority but constituted a majority of the residents of the cities; they attempted to maintain control by manoeuvring between acceding somewhat to the demands of the other ethnic groups and suppressing these groups in such a way as to retain their own privileges without causing the collapse of the Iraqi state.

One way of dealing with this political problem was by means of development: improvement of agricultural methods; the establishment of industry; elimination of illiteracy which encompassed more than 90 per cent of the population; development of the educational system; sedentarization of the Bedouin tribes, and so on. Development was supposed to contribute to the general welfare, thereby reducing tension and social and economic hostility between ethnic groups. But a large, long-term investment was

required; there were numerous obstacles to obtaining it, and the results were by no means guaranteed, especially in the short term.

The structure of the Iraqi government, too, posed obstacles to development. The Iraqi regime was parliamentary in theory and oligarchical in practice. The government was controlled by urban capitalists and sheikhs who owned most of the land in the country. This predominantly Sunni ruling class was a small minority of the population, but its members enjoyed their status, opposed any change that might detract from it, and thwarted any proposed political or agrarian reform. Hatred of this elite caused incessant domestic agitation.

In addition to these fundamental problems there were war-related economic problems: a shortage of essential commodities, due to increased consumption by British and American troops, and skyrocketing prices, with inflation at roughly 600 per cent altogether from 1939 to 1945. The effects on society were catastrophic: while merchants became rich and service-providers employed by the British benefited, most of the people—*fellahin*, low-ranking civil servants, and unemployed, educated young people—became more impoverished. Much of the Iraqi population was on the verge of starvation. By the time World War II ended, political, economic and social tensions had reached the brink of an explosion, and the economic hardship triggered social ferment that lasted throughout the second half of the 1940s. In addition to the economic problems, there was a political factor involved: since the pro-Nazi government had been routed in 1941, pro-democracy declarations had been made and improvements promised. The cumulative effect elicited expectations of greater democratization. Public agitation was led by opposition groups: the moderate left and the communists on the one hand and the extreme right-wing activists, many of whom had been recently released from detention camps, on the other. In domestic matters, they demanded the repeal of the wartime emergency laws, relaxation of press censorship and legalization of political parties. In foreign affairs they called for full Iraqi independence through amendment of the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty and elimination of the military and political restrictions deriving from it, and they demanded a strong stance on the Palestine question to prevent the establishment of a Jewish state.

As a result of the economic crisis, the suppression of freedom of expression, and political developments in the Middle East, mass street demonstrations were common from 1945 to 1948. The short-lived Iraqi governments responded in various ways—sometimes capitulation and concessions, sometimes persecution and suppression—in an attempt to prevent the collapse of the regime by appearing to give in, while really making sure that any reform failed if it was opposed to the particularistic interests of the oligarchy on which the monarchy depended.

In early 1946, an attempt at political reform was made under the leadership of Prime Minister Tawfiq al-Suwaydi, who four years later brought about the enactment of the law permitting the emigration of Iraqi Jewry. The Suwaydi government repealed the emergency laws in the province of Baghdad, abolished press censorship, and even passed a new electoral law.[8] The government approved the establishment of five parties on the right, the left and the centre but rejected the Communist Party's request for legalization. The reforms were harshly criticized by conservative opponents, who were panicked by the popularity of the political parties and by opposition elements that wanted full compliance with their demands. In late May 1946, al-Suwaydi was forced to resign. He was replaced by a rival, Arshad al-Umari, whose brutal, oppressive regime targeted

Kurdish rebels and striking workers, freedom of the press, and political parties. The communists were especially persecuted.[9]

The year 1948 was particularly turbulent. A severe food shortage in late 1947—caused by a meagre crop, deterioration of the country's economy and a delay in the import of grain—led to renewed societal ferment. The signing of a new Anglo-Iraqi Treaty in Portsmouth, England, on 15 January 1948, was the immediate, direct pretext for mass protests. A three-day strike, attacks on the British and their supporters in the government and in the general population, and violent demonstrations by wild mobs in which hundreds of people were killed and wounded all forced the Iraqi leadership to rescind the treaty In the heat of the violence, demands for agrarian reforms, autonomy in Kurdistan, and other matters came up. Prime Minister Salih Jabr resigned and left the country. But the turmoil continued, and in April 1948 the demonstrations intensified, this time to demand action against the Zionist state that the United Nations (UN) General Assembly had resolved, on 29 November 1947, to establish. The demonstrations were an initiative of the nationalist right, which demanded that an army be sent to fight in the war in Palestine, that the flow of oil along a pipeline to Haifa be stopped, and that the Palestinian Arab exiles be welcomed.[10]

IRAQ AND THE PALESTINE PROBLEM

Political involvement in the Palestine question by Iraqi leaders, political parties, newspapers and citizens was nothing new. The problem had preoccupied groups in Iraqi society since the late 1920s, and involvement increased as Jewish-Arab tension in Palestine escalated. During the three-year-long Arab revolt in Palestine (1936–1939), stormy demon-strations were held against Zionism and against the Jews, bombs were thrown at Jewish public institutions, and a few passersby were even murdered. The incitement reached its peak during the regime of Rashid Ali al-Gailani in April and May 1941 and then in the Farhud. In the first half of the 1940s, the Iraqi people were incited against Zionism by propaganda campaigns in the press, initiated by Nuri al-Said himself (see below). But from 1945 to 1948, the Palestine question became one of the main topics on the Iraqi public agenda and preoccupied the country's leaders, political parties, the press, and the 'man in the street'.

On the pan-Arab and international political level, too, Iraq displayed substantial interest in this issue, taking part in Arab League discussions on the subject and having diplomatic contacts with the British and Americans and with the commissions of inquiry—Anglo-American and the UN Special Commission on Palestine (UNSCOP) that looked into the matter. Iraq took a radical stance, consistently pressing for implementation of the secret resolutions of the June 1946 Blodan conference. The participants in this conference resolved to provide military assistance to the Arabs of Palestine in their war against the Zionists, and to cancel or not to renew oil concessions to the United States and Britain if they supported the establishment of a Jewish state. The Iraqi delegate, Dr Fadhil Jamali, said: 'Iraq has shown more concern than any other Arab state for the future of Palestine.'[11] In their book *Both Sides of the Hill*, the brothers Jon and David Kimche suggest that this was merely camouflage for Iraq's disinclination or inability to take real action against the Jews of Palestine.[12]

In any case, on the practical level there is no evidence that the Iraqi government intended to do anything to implement the demands made by its representatives at Arab League conferences, at rallies, in radio broadcasts and in the Iraqi press. On the contrary Nuri al-Said's consistent stance on the Palestine question[13] was more pragmatic and moderate than those of the other Arab leaders, was not acceptable to them, and was certainly unacceptable to the Arabs of Palestine. Furthermore, Iraq made its participation in implementing the secret Blodan resolutions—both military assistance and sanctions against the western powers—contingent on the participation of the other Arab countries. When it encountered hesitation, procrastination, and even opposition, Iraq took no independent action. The effectiveness of the Iraqi statements was also questionable due to the condition of its army, with its outdated equipment. Britain acceded partially to Iraqi requests for weapons but stopped the supply after Iraq revoked the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty in January 1948. In February of that year Iraq stopped demanding the immediate implementation of the secret Blodan resolutions. According to the Iraqi parliamentary commission that investigated the failure of the war in Israel, this was either 'for internal reasons [rioting in the streets, the governmental crisis and the crisis in relations with Britain], because of the stance of the Arab countries in the previous sessions, or for both reasons combined'.[14]

The duplicitous behaviour of the Iraqi leadership with respect to Israel is a key issue in the study of Iraqi policy vis-à-vis the war in Israel in 1948 and Iraq's attitude towards its own Jewish community. How can the radical verbal demands be reconciled with the relative moderation of its positions in practice? The answer seems to have to do with Iraq's domestic problems and its status in the Arab world.

The Iraqi stance on the Palestine question was one issue on which the divided Iraqi society was united. It bridged the differences between Sunnis, Shiites and Christians, and between Arabs, Kurds and others. It also bridged the differences between oppressed *fellahin* and the urban proletariat, land-owning sheikhs and the urban upper class, the oppressed masses and the rulers. All these elements of society were unanimous in their opposition to the establishment of a Jewish state. The oligarchical, pro-British government, hated by most Iraqis, made the most of this common denominator and consequently diverted attention from the pressing problems of the deteriorating economy, political oppression, bureaucratic corruption, and so on. The radical statements by Iraqi delegates in the Arab League were presumably also meant to cover up for the Iraqi regime and its leading figure, Nuri al-Said, who were regarded as British agents by other Arab leaders and by their own people. Iraq may have been trying to prove its loyalty to the Arab cause by advocating radical positions in principle, without intending to take any action to implement them. Furthermore, Iraq had no shared border with Israel and no concrete interests in the area.

But even if the extreme Iraqi statements were mere lip service, their cumulative effect had its own dynamics, and the people who were exposed to this propaganda for years regarded Palestine not only as a political problem but also as a religious and moral problem relevant to every Muslim. The British historian Stephen Hemsley Longrigg, who served as an advisor to the Iraqi interior minister in the 1920s and as one of the managers of the Iraqi oil company from 1931 to 1951, described the Zionist problem as perceived by the Iraqi people:

> The problem of Arab survival in Palestine against the threat of rich, ubiquitous, and ably directed Zionism, backed by American money and competing political interest (and supported by strong elements in Britain), excelled all others in the eyes of more and wider elements than any other foreign issue could interest. It aroused sincere and bitter sentiment as showing, it was felt, the full picture of Western injustice and cynicism, and it united all parties in the dangerous atmosphere of anti-European emotion.[15]

Therefore, when fighting broke out in Palestine after the UN partition resolution, and as 15 May 1948 drew near, thousands of impassioned demonstrators demanded that their government go to war to help the Arabs of Palestine and not merely send volunteers and material assistance. In view of the already poor political situation, the Iraqi government saw no way out and dispatched three regiments, even though the army was not prepared in terms of equipment, ammunition and—most importantly—training. According to the parliamentary commission that investigated the failure of the war against Israel:

> The truth is that there was no serious military preparation. In Iraq, in any case, there was no war atmosphere. No desire was felt to fight against the 50,000 members of the Zionist gangs, who were armed with the best weapons and equipment. Thus, when our units entered the fighting, they suffered from a severe shortage of supplies and ammunition.[16]

All of this increased activity surrounding the Palestine issue had grave ramifications for the Jewish community in Iraq. In all of their publications, statements and activities, the Iraqi leaders were careful to distinguish between Zionists and Jews and stressed that the Iraqi Jews were a religious community that was patriotic and loyal to its homeland and had nothing to do with Zionism.[17] Nevertheless, as the Palestine problem grew worse, against their will, the Jews of Iraq became an integral part of the conflict. In a speech in August 1944, Nuri al-Said declared that the wrath of the Arab masses was liable to respond to the Zionist proposals for Palestine by turning against the Jews.[18] In the autumn of 1947, prior to the debates of the UN General Assembly, the Iraqi delegate, Dr Jamali, warned that the interests and welfare of 600,000 Jews in Arab countries would be in danger if 'Zionist aggression' succeeded.[19] In October, Arab governments warned UNSCOP that 'the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine will lead to the eruption of riots throughout the Middle East'.[20] We have no way of knowing what they intended to accomplish with these statements and warnings. The implication is that the Arab governments would not initiate riots but that 'spontaneous' riots were likely. Quite possibly, the warnings were intended merely to exert political pressure on the great powers. In any case, on 16 February 1948, against the backdrop of the fighting in Palestine, the political committee of the Arab League adopted secret resolutions specifically relating to the Jews of Arab countries and linking them with the struggle against Zionism:

1. The Arab countries will protect themselves against [the] dangers [of Zionism] with the same measures that they use to fight Communism.

2. The Arab countries will expel from their lands any foreign national who is proven to be involved in Zionist activity.
3. Taking note of the stormy passions in Arab countries and wishing to safeguard the welfare and property of the Jewish citizens, we propose alerting the community leaders and warning them that any act of Zionist terrorism is liable to bring a holocaust upon the entire Jewish community Consequently, it is incumbent upon them to help maintain peace and security.[21]

These resolutions indicate that the official line vis-à-vis the Jews of Arab countries had not changed, and the distinction between Zionist and Jew remained in force. Ostensibly, the resolutions even contain an implicit positive message: so long as the Jewish community remained loyal to its homeland and was not involved in Zionist activity the safety of the Jews and their property was guaranteed. But, in fact, these resolutions indicate a new political stance that augured a decline in the status of the Jewish communities in Arab countries. We see this not in the wording of the resolutions but in their spirit, based on the possible broad interpretation of the resolutions and the use that might be made of them:

1. By referring to concern about Zionist activity in the Jewish communities, the resolutions cast doubt on the loyalty of the Jews in general to their Arab homelands.
2. No precise definition was given for the term ‘Zionist activity’, and no date was set for the resolutions to take effect. Thus they could be applied retroactively to activities carried out in the past, when Zionism was legal in Iraq.
3. The third clause does not specify whether it refers to an ‘act of Zionist terrorism’ carried out by Palestinian Jews or by their sympathizers in the local Jewish community. Even if it is meant only in the second sense, it holds all the Jews responsible for the misdeeds of an individual, using the threat of collective punishment in contravention of the principles of justice and international law.

These resolutions, put into effect in Iraq in July 1948, launched a new chapter in the history of the Jewish community.

THE DOWNTURN IN THE CONDITION OF IRAQI JEWRY

Shortly after the riots of June 1941, the Jews’ lives returned to normal. The security situation was stabilized, the community recovered and the presence of the British army boosted the Jews’ sense of security. The hardship suffered by most of the Iraqi population during the war bypassed the Jews completely The army’s demand for provisions and skilled personnel opened up new economic options. Commerce flourished and many people became rich.

The British presence protected the Jews, but suppressed hatred simmered under the surface and became visible in times of crisis. One such time was the summer of 1942, when Rommel was fighting the British in Egypt. Many Arabs believed that a German victory was at hand and their support for them swelled, along with hatred for the British and their Jewish sympathizers. Anti-Jewish leaflets appeared in the streets; one of them read: ‘Rashid Ali, the Leader of the Arabs, is returning with ropes and gallows to hang a

number of criminal Jews, Christian traitors and other enemies of Islam.'[22] When Tobruk, Egypt, fell in June 1942, the Zionist emissaries sent warning letters to Palestine:

> Not only did the Arabs slaughter sheep and have parties; they even started to taunt the Jews, for now not seriously, until the head of the community phoned the Prime Minister: If it's like this at the fall of Tobruk, what will happen, Heaven forbid, at the fall of Egypt?[23]

In the autumn of 1943, the Iraqi press was flooded with anti-Zionist incitement, published at the initiative of the authorities and with their support. This was Nuri's way of hinting to the British and the Americans not to adopt a pro-Zionist policy in Palestine. The Iraqis were concerned that a Jewish state in the heart of the Middle East would be the death knell for Nuri's efforts at Arab unification. In Longrigg's opinion, this was the reason for the vociferous, anti-Zionist tone of the Iraqi press in 1943. As a result of this campaign, he writes: 'Nervousness could not but increase among the thousands of Baghdadi Jews, to whom Zionism was distasteful and potentially ruinous.'[24]

The British ambassador, Sir Kinahan Cornwallis, was worried about the American reaction to the incitement campaign, especially because of an article printed in an Iraqi newspaper on 16 September, which stated: 'The policy of extreme Zionists would act adversely on the Jews living in Arab countries other than Palestine.'[25] The incitement was also reported by aliyah emissaries in Iraq: 'Every night and every day, the newspapers and radio have anti-Jewish protests and reports, some of them enticing and some of them threatening.'[26]

All this time, Nuri al-Said stressed repeatedly that the Jews of Iraq were fully-fledged Iraqi citizens, loyal to their country and their homeland.[27] He discovered how complex their situation and their views were, however, when he demanded that they express a clear position on the Palestine question. At the time, Nuri was propounding his plan for the merger of Syria, Lebanon, Palestine and Transjordan into one country and the establishment of an Arab league that would include Greater Syria and Iraq and would be open to the other Arab countries. His plan offered the Jews of Palestine semi-autonomy and a freeze on further development of the Jewish national home.[28] To promote his plan, Nuri demanded that the Jewish dignitaries issue a statement against the 'Zionist extremists' and in favour of his programme. The community leaders therefore had to address the issue of Zionism and to express a well-formulated stance on a subject that they had tried to avoid for years. To the Prime Minister's surprise the dignitaries refused his request, explaining that their statement would have no effect on the Zionists and would not be believed by the British and the Americans. They told him that the Iraqi Jews were interested in business, not politics, knew nothing about the Palestine question, had never been involved in resolving the conflict and were certainly not going to become involved in those tense times.[29]

Kitling, a Criminal Investigation Department (CID) man in Palestine who was sent to Iraq in January 1944, explained this refusal after speaking with the Jewish senator Ezra Daniel:

> On more than one occasion since 1941 he [Daniel] and other leading Iraqi Jews had been approached by the Government and asked to make a

> declaration disassociating themselves from Zionism and stating that they were perfectly happy as members of the Iraqi state. This they had refused to do because they did not feel themselves secure or happy and considered that to have issued such a statement would have reflected badly on the Government as the outside world would have considered it the result of pressure.[30]

These Jewish leaders, who had issued anti-Zionist statements in the 1930s, now boldly and vehemently refused a similar request. They did so not because they had changed their minds about Zionism but as a protest against the authorities' treatment of the Jewish community

But Nuri did not understand, did not want to understand, or was unable to understand, the message of the Jewish leaders. He interpreted their refusal as identification with Zionism. Cornwallis, the British ambassador, reported Nuri's perspective:

> He felt that if they [the community leaders] did not believe in extreme Zionist ambitions, they should make their attitude quite plain. But if on the other hand, they were sympathetic to Zionist aspirations etc. he felt their best course would be to keep quiet and so avoid being provoked.[31]

The anti-Zionist pronouncements worried the Jews. The British embassy reported that the anti-Zionist campaign in the autumn of 1943 'was naturally very worrisome to the Jews, who have bitter memories of 1941, and showed full well how quickly the Baghdad rabble can be incited under official, high-level auspices'. The British were afraid that, in view of the strict control of radio and the press, someone would conclude that the propaganda was being spread with their consent.[32]

The elimination of Jews from the Civil Service picked up speed. Abraham el-Kabir, director-general of the Finance Ministry and one of the leaders of the Jewish community, described the process and the results:

> Jews in Government service were slowly and gradually eliminated first individually and later collectively More than one pretext could be found: redundancy and economy due to what was claimed to be a lower standard of education…
>
> No new recruits were admitted under any circumstances and even contractual obligations to students returning from studies abroad were ignored on the plea that there were no suitable vacancies for them. Pressure was extended to private firms including foreign banks and trade institutions to dispense with the services of their Jewish staff or at least not to admit new recruits…
>
> Jewish activities in the legal and medical professions were curtailed. Court and particularly administrative actions sponsored by Jewish lawyers were often unsuccessful and so even Jewish litigants preferred the service of an influential moslem *[sic]* even if he were a second grade lawyer. Some successful Jewish doctors were some times *[sic]* blackmailed and even threatened by some of their colleagues who urged the Government to

> nationalize the health service and put an end to the monopoly of a few Jewish doctors.
>
> In the economic field, particularly trade and banking, Jewish activity was greatly handicapped by all sorts of controls, import licences, exchange control, banking control etc. Many of these were well meant but improperly applied to hit the Jews.[33]

Jewish commerce suffered after the government imposed economic restraints on the textile industry in November 1943. Textile merchants, including many Jews, were jailed on charges of over-charging. The Jewish community was gripped by panic, terrified of the Iraqi authorities and the British, both of whom were perceived as being responsible for the economic policy According to Aryeh Eshel (Shill), who was in Iraq from 1943 to 1944 as an emissary of the Mossad le-Aliyah Bet (commonly referred to as the Mossad), the agency that organized clandestine immigration to Palestine (known in Hebrew as *aliyah*):

> Most of the merchants are still afraid of the authorities, and the panic has crossed into other branches of commerce that were not directly affected. They are afraid that the golden age of commerce is over and are becoming more aware that the latest measures were directed mainly against the textile industry because it is mostly in Jewish hands (although some Muslims and Christians were also affected).[34]

The Iraqi administration viewed the matter differently According to Ahmad Iraawi, director-general of the police, 'The Iraqi Government… was making every effort to handle the situation carefully and to circumvent anything which might affect Arab/Jewish relations adversely' Nevertheless, the result was an increase in feelings of bitterness and resentment towards the British. This came as no surprise. As Kitling wrote, 'It was probable, he [Iraawi] thought, that the present action to control certain essential commodities would be construed by the Jews as an attempt by the British to discomfort them, as the Jews have wide commercial interests in Baghdad.'[35]

To bring about the resumption of commerce, the government instituted rules to regulate it, but these, too, hurt Jewish merchants severely. Aryeh Eshel reported:

> The government has started to publish prices for many products that are traded mainly by Jews, and the prices are generally 20 per cent of the formerly standard market prices. Fabulous sums have been lost. And as if that were not enough, now they're about to concentrate foreign imports in the hands of a few people.[36]

The new arrangement enabled the government to grant import licenses to Muslim businessmen and to reduce Jewish control of the textile trade. As Eshel described it,

> There is deep despair, verging on panic, in the Jewish street. And to a few people, the more highly developed ones, the latest government measures appear to be the beginning of a long road of eliminating the Jews from the

> economic life of the state… After the war there is no doubt that commerce will not return to its previous Jewish owners; the government will see to that.[37]

The frequency of anti-Jewish manifestations in the media and in social and economic life gave the Jews the sense that the crisis that had begun with the Farhud in the summer of 1941 had not passed, because its causes were still present. The anxiety caused by the summer of 1941 had faded but had not disappeared. It stuck to the community like a shadow and became evident again with every anti-Zionist article and with every economic act that had anti-Jewish features. The intensity of this anxiety and its effects on the behaviour of the Jews were so significant that the British noticed it. Jack Saul, a Jew who represented the United Press in Baghdad and had close ties with British embassy personnel, told Kitling: 'Jews do not feel secure in Iraq and after the war many will probably move elsewhere. This will not necessarily be Palestine. They will never "pioneer" in Palestine: what they want is comfort.' As a solution, Saul suggested turning Iraq into a British crown colony. Similarly, Senator Ezra Daniel told Kitling that the Jews' feelings toward the Arabs had changed since the Rashid Ali rebellion; they now hated and distrusted them. Because they felt vulnerable, some of the Jews of Baghdad would undoubtedly emigrate when possible, but not necessarily to Palestine. A few embassy staff and British advisors also told Kitling of the sense of insecurity that plagued the Jews.[38]

JEWISH-BRITISH RELATIONS

The deterioration of the Iraqi Jews' sense of security affected not only Jewish-Arab relations but also Jewish-British relations. The British discovered that Jewish public opinion was hostile to them and that some Jews were involved in spreading anti-British propaganda. Major Wilkins, a technical advisor to the Iraqi secret police, investigated this at the request of the British ambassador and came up with several factors that he believed had led to a change in the Jews' attitude toward Britain.[39] First and foremost, the Jews felt that the British forces should have protected them in June 1941 but had not done so. The British had not even forced the Iraqi government to mete out harsh punishments to the accused or to impose a collective fine on the city of Baghdad to compensate the Jews. As Wilkins saw it, This feeling is probably the strongest single cause of the fall in British popularity and it affects all classes.' Furthermore, the Jews believed that the British government, through the embassy and British advisors, was responsible for introducing regulatory measures that, according to Wilkins, 'have robbed profiteers and racketeers of the golden harvest they had anticipated'. Wilkins also noted several additional factors, including the Indian government's opposition to the entry of Iraqi Jews and Iraqi government restrictions on issuing passports for emigration to Palestine, both of which were construed as British policy. Finally, Wilkins added that young Jews in Baghdad complained of discrimination in social events sponsored by the British embassy. The Wilkins report reflects animosity towards the Jews and even antisemitism, now that the political alliance between the Jews and the British had come to an end. But it also reflects the existential anxiety of the Iraqi Jews and their strong suspicion of the British.

In a conversation with Kitling, Ezra Daniel accused the British of being 'prepared to use the Iraqi Jews as pawns in their political game without considering the possible effect such a course might have on the Jews themselves'. He claimed that the British had introduced Zionism to Iraq in the 1920s, had supported the Zionists in Palestine, and were now betraying the Jews. In Kitling's opinion, Daniel was convinced that 'Britain is the cause of every evil that has befallen the Jews of Iraq.'[40] Yishuv sources, too, reflect this attitude. Enzo Sereni, a Mossad emissary explained:

> The Jews all want to prove one thing—that the English betrayed them. That they made them a promise and didn't keep it… The pogrom was just the climax of a process that began years ago…The opinion of all the Iraqi Jews with whom I have spoken is that the English witnessed a pogrom without lifting a finger to help the Jews.[41]

One Palestinian Jewish worker in northern Iraq reported: The Jews think that, instead of the Assyrian game ball, the English have chosen the Jews in the past year.'[42]

Some of the documents from the British embassy in Baghdad in the early 1940s indicate that the Jews' perceptions were not unfounded. In a report written three months after the Farhud, the British ambassador, Cornwallis, described the Jewish community of Baghdad:

> This community has for long justly prided itself on its culture, its enterprise and its admiration for British ideas and institutions… Recently, Baghdad Jewry has fallen on evil days. This is largely due to the unfortunate reactions of Zionism. Despite the proviso of the Balfour Declaration safeguarding the rights of Jews in other countries those of the Baghdad community never seem to have been taken into consideration. Inevitably, though quite falsely, they have been regarded as Zionists, and have paid the price, not only in 'benevolences' running into thousands of pounds, but also with their blood. They are naturally bitter at the attitude of the Zionists towards them.

Particularly interesting is the ambassador's conclusion:

> Zionism is in great measure responsible for the present difficulties of the Jewish community, but it also makes it vitally necessary for us to be most careful how we assist the community, if both helper and helped are not to be involved in a common charge of being Zionist agents.[43]

In blaming Zionism for the situation of Iraqi Jewry, Cornwallis ignored the British role in the development of the Jewish problem in Iraq: the traditional Jewish-British collaboration in the Persian Gulf region and the political alliance between the British Mandatory authorities and the Jews. This undermining of fragile, delicate relations between population groups because of political interests, and the denial of responsibility for the dismal results of this policy, also due to political interests, is a typical product of colonialism. By the 1940s, the British—correctly identifying the ascending forces in Iraqi

society—were no longer relying on the minorities but instead sought the support of the Iraqi national movement. Support for the Jews, particularly in view of the Arab struggle against Zionism, was liable to cost the British the remainder of their colonial influence in Iraq. This price, it seems, was too high for them.

Similar attitudes emerge in the Wilkins report in reference to the riots of June 1941. Wilkins laid the responsibility for the Farhud on the Jews, claiming that they had provoked the Muslims, threatened them and even insulted the defeated Iraqi soldiers. He also maintained that the number of victims was much smaller than claimed by the Jews. Ambassador Cornwallis agreed with Wilkins's conclusions, but not with the assertion that British behaviour during the Farhud had a major effect on the Jews. In Cornwallis's opinion, the main factor was economic:

> Of all the reasons for the growth of the Jewish antipathy which Major Wilkins enumerates, it seems probable to me that the price control measures which have been put into effect under British auspices and the financial losses which these measures have caused to the Iraqi Jewish community, have been the most potent in their effect. These are a daily cause of exasperation and cause the Jewish mind to dwell with increasing bitterness on events experienced in the past or foreseen in the future which give any ground for a grievance against His Majesty's Government.[44]

The ambassador chose to attribute the Jews' thoughts and reactions primarily to greed, thus showing himself to have a distinctly antisemitic attitude. Quite likely, Cornwallis was also uncomfortable with Wilkins's conclusions because he himself had been the ambassador at the time of the Farhud and had done nothing to stop it.

The Jews, in contrast, alleged that these economic measures were meant to make things easier not only for Muslim businessmen but also for British agencies that were competing with the Jews. The unsympathetic British attitude made them feel rejected and discriminated against. Their increasing dependence on the British, combined with the local Arabs' increasing hostility toward them, made the Jews pessimistic and bitter.

Toward the end of the war, cracks began to appear in the political and social order forced on Iraq by the emergency laws and the presence of British troops. In mid-1944, the pro-Nazi detainees began to be released from detention camps. They regained social positions and political office and contributed to the rise and recovery of the antisemitic right wing. They accused the British of being responsible for the ills of the Iraqi regime and resumed anti-Jewish propaganda in the press, in schools, and in public meeting places, focusing their incitement on the Palestine problem. In November 1944, after the assassination of Lord Moyne in Cairo, the Jews' fears intensified. 'The feeling', wrote the Zionist emissaries, 'is that were it not for the presence of the English, riots would break out against the Jews.'[45] Years of anti-Zionist incitement had implanted antisemitic stereotypes in Arab society. An agent of the OSS (Office of Strategic Services, the US espionage agency at the time) wrote in February 1945 that many Arabs considered Judaism an old, backward religion. The Zionists were depicted as miserly, cowardly and dirty, and the idea that Arabs might be ruled by Jews became intolerable.[46] An article printed in *al-Arab* in March 1945 described the Jews as

> the only people who always cause mischief to every nation which renders them any good; people without any feeling of gratitude whatever…they are the main elements of vice in the blackmarket, a bloodthirsty element in all the countries of God's earth, the only nation which knows no Home Country to which it belongs and can seek refuge and which is composed of evil, crime and vice.[47]

Whereas in the 1930s antisemitism had been limited to small ideological and political groups, it was now common among broad sectors of the population, especially the intelligentsia and numerous educated young nationalists who were influenced by it. During the war, the Palestine problem, which had begun to reverberate in Iraqi society a decade earlier, became an Iraqi political problem and a touchstone of Iraq's leadership ability in the Arab world. Under the influence of anti-semitic incitement, this problem took on a religious-mystical dimension and was perceived as an assault on Muslim religious values and the honour of the Arab nation.

The status of Iraqi Jewry underwent change, too. Although still dependent on the British, the Jews had lost much of their confidence in receiving assistance in their time of need. They realized that the British would be willing to protect them only if it did not harm British interests. Concurrently, the increasing concentration of Jews in commerce and in clerical and managerial positions in commercial firms—a narrow, visible line of work subject to extreme oscillations—exposed them to jealousy and hatred and heightened their dependence on the good graces of the authorities.

The Zionist emissaries foresaw catastrophe. Aryeh Eshel reported on a conversation between one of the community leaders and a senior Iraqi official who warned that 'the days of Rashid Ali are nothing compared to what will happen here in the future'. Eshel added:

> We can only add that this time one may place full confidence in this man's words. And really—something dreadful can be expected here. Today things are absolutely quiet, with no signs of riots, and this situation can last a long time, maybe even years. But [with] all the wild incitement in the press, the portrayal of our enterprise as Satan obstructing the liberation of the noble Arab nation, jealousy of the economic positions of the Jews of Berman [Iraq], pressure is developing here that will inevitably burst out and cause an explosion.[48]

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECT ON THE JEWS

The increasing hostility inevitably had an impact on the Jewish community of Iraq, especially as it was accompanied by economic and social discrimination in Civil Service jobs, in commerce, and in finance.

The reduction in the number of Jewish students in institutions of higher education and the restrictions on travel to foreign universities intensified the sense of discrimination. In early May 1946, rigid restrictions were imposed on the departure of Jews for Palestine: in order to leave Iraq, a Jew had to deposit a bond of 2,000 dinars to guarantee the person's

return to Iraq.[49] The government also enacted regulations prohibiting Jews from entering or passing through Iraq. The ban on bringing in Jewish and Hebrew books and newspapers remained in force, ostensibly to prevent the dissemination of possibly subversive materials, especially Zionist propaganda.[50] These actions by the Iraqi government were perceived by the Jews as anti-Jewish policies, and many even viewed them as a British initiative. The collapse of the pro-British orientation among the Jews left a political vacuum, but joining the anti-British nationalist camp was not an option because of its reactionary tendencies and antisemitic views. The parties on the left were open to Jews, but as persecuted opposition organizations they could attract only a small number of young people. Most of the Jews were left with no solution to the problems of national identity that confronted them in the late 1940s. Insecurity and uncertainty became characteristic of Jewish society.

Although this situation was the result of domestic political, social, and economic processes, it was exacerbated by developments in Palestine, which radiated tension, worries, and fear onto the Iraqi Jewish community, especially as the conflict escalated. The reverberations of the conflict were evident in political life and in the Iraqi media, and they had a tremendous influence on the mood in the Jewish community.

President Truman's call in August 1945 to bring 100,000 Jewish refugees to Palestine evoked sharp criticism in parliament and in the press.[51] Reports of terrorist attacks in Palestine reached Iraq in the summer of 1945, and news of anti-Jewish riots in Cairo and Tripoli followed in November 1945.[52] In January 1946, in keeping with an Arab League resolution, Iraq declared a boycott on the import of Jewish-made goods from Palestine. Iraq also contributed hundreds of thousands of dinars to the Palestinian Arab propaganda bureau headed by Moussa Alami.[53] When the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry came to Iraq in February 1946, several government officials lambasted and warned them against the idea of a Zionist state in an attempt to dissuade them from recommending its establishment. The leaders of the Jewish community were also asked to give testimony When the committee's recommendations were published in late April 1946, Iraqis were enraged. Some newspapers came out framed in black, schoolchildren took part in demonstrations, and the political parties organized a general protest strike (10 May) and street demonstrations. A few months later, on 2 November—Balfour Declaration Day—a general strike was staged in protest against Zionism.[54] The UN resolution of 29 November 1947, to partition Palestine into two states was greeted by stormy demonstrations. The media were full of anti-Zionist speeches, and volunteers began to enlist to help the Arabs of Palestine. On their way to the front, the Arab volunteers rioted against the Jews in the town of Falluja (28 January 1948), wounding several Jews and looting property.[55] News of the war in Palestine appeared in the Iraqi headlines for months, and as 15 May 1948—the end of the British Mandate in Palestine—drew near, the streets of Baghdad filled with demonstrations by fired-up mobs holding anti-Zionist and anti-Jewish signs and calling on their government to take an active part in the war. 'Jews who stood on the sidewalks at the time and watched what was happening,' Yitzhak Bar-Moshe, one of the young people in the community at the time, recounts in his memoirs, 'heard calls to liquidate the Jews and could not believe their ears.'[56]

What effect did these events have on the Iraqi Jewish community? News of the Holocaust in Europe undoubtedly influenced the way the Jews interpreted political events in Iraq. They realized that a mass annihilation of Jews was possible, and they were afraid

that the Muslims might decide to apply this precedent in Iraq, which was rife with Nazi and antisemitic propaganda. Meanwhile, the Zionist movement was disseminating the 'lessons of the Holocaust' through educational and informational activity in Hehalutz (a worldwide youth movement that prepared young Jews to settle in Palestine), and through it was working on reaching the Jews at large. The information material reflected deep-seated fears in Palestine regarding the fate of the Jews in Islamic countries; the intensity of these fears was a direct outcome of the Holocaust. One such booklet read:

> We Jews of Iraq, before we criticize the Jews of Hungary for not taking the necessary precautions in time, should ourselves look and see that we are in no less danger than these European Jews. We are living among more dangerous people here who proved to be savage enough in June 1941… How can we depend upon the government to defend us and not to itself kill us as was done by the European governments at the dictation of the Nazis… We, the Iraqian Jews, are like the Hungarians and do not heed that there is danger all around us… As the Germans will continue to hate the Jews, the Iraqis will do likewise as hatred of the Jews is NOW in the blood of the Iraqi people…[57]

The reports sent from Baghdad to the Mossad and to the Jewish Agency Political Department disclose an atmosphere of panic, especially from the summer of 1945 until mid-1946, when the conflict in Palestine was escalating. In May 1945, Meir Shilon (Shlank) reported heightened tension after the murder of a Jewish peddler and after anti-Jewish agitation in a demonstration against France. The reaction was typical:

> There was panic, and the Jews closed their shops. Many people came to take their children out of school. There was a great deal of tension, which has eased only slightly. People even stopped walking in the streets so much at night for fear of murders (as in 1937–1938, when there were attacks on and murders of individuals). The community leaders met several times with the heads of the regime and soothed and quieted the Jews. They took responsibility for ensuring that nothing would happen.[58]

Two months later he reported that a rumour was circulating among the Jews

> that French radio has reported that the French have seized a secret document in the Syrian parliament regarding the murder of all the Jews of the east if the Palestine question is resolved in favor of the Jews. Is there any truth to this?[59]

Jews again hid-out before the incidents of 2 November 1945, and in May 1946. This time some Jews chose to stay in Christian hotels and others made efforts to obtain arms. As early as November 1945, it was reported that Jews were purchasing arms and applying for visas and that many young people were applying to universities in the United States. 'Every family is trying to send one of its children abroad,' described Shilon. The feeling here is distressing. A huge detention camp. It's impossible to get out of here.'[60] In fact,

only a few families sent their children abroad, and some families even emigrated during this time, but these remarks give an indication of the prevailing pessimism. Yerahmiel Asa, a Zionist emissary in Iraq (December 1946-July 1948), returned to Palestine temporarily in October 1947 and told the secretariat of Hakibbutz Hameuhad:

> The Jews' situation has become worse lately. The Iraqi press is full of incitement… On Rosh Hashanah we were expecting riots and there were rumors that there would be demonstrations and a massacre of Jews. And [some] Jews shut themselves up in the ghetto.[61]

After the resolution of 29 November, the Jews were gripped by worry, as recounted in the memoirs of Salman Shina, a member of the Iraqi parliament:

> Although they were happy about the fulfillment of the two-thousand-year-old dream…all the signs indicated evil intentions on the part of their neighbors, and no Jew felt secure about his life and the lives of his household… Even in parliament there was a stormy session devoted to the black day in the history of the Arab race.[62]

Descriptions by Zionist emissaries give the impression of constant physical danger hovering over the Jews' heads, but this impression is inaccurate. The tension was manifested mainly in politics and the media. It was mainly students and party activists who were involved in the mass demonstrations. The vast majority of people remained passive. Chronologically speaking, there were two periods of tension: one towards the end of World War II (1945) and the other, more severe and more intense, from late 1947 to May 1948. Between the two periods there was relative quiet. Moreover, the Iraqi governments (there were six governments in Iraq between 1945 and 1948) did all they could to protect the lives of the Jews, whether out of concern for their welfare, for the sake of the country's reputation and to prove its positive attitude toward minorities in general and toward the Jews in particular, or because they were afraid that anti-Jewish riots would evolve into anti-government riots.

Furthermore, despite the tension, its direct effects on the day-to-day lives of Iraqi Jews were limited. From the perspective of the individual Jew, the period from 1946 until late 1947 was one of relative quiet, and despite economic discrimination, the Jews were better off than the non-Jewish population of Iraqi cities.[63] The Jews circumvented the economic restrictions by taking on Muslim business partners, working in private businesses, and taking advantage of friendly relations with Muslim officials, which sometimes involved bribery However, we should not ignore the price of these measures: harm to the Jews' economic position and to their sense of security. The relative tranquillity is reflected in a critical report by Shlomo Hillel, an emissary of the Zionist movement, in May 1947:

> They [the Iraqi Jews] are perfectly satisfied with their status here, because the comfortable economic conditions here blind them completely, and no attention is paid to the frightful manifestations of hatred around them, which essentially are placing all of the Jews here at the mouth of a volcano, so to speak, that could erupt at any moment… As those days [of

> the riots] become more distant, the Jews hurriedly wipe the matter out of their memories and its results out of their thoughts.[64]

While individuals were preoccupied by problems of day-to-day life, the community leaders could not help but be concerned by the growing hostility toward the community They chose to deal with the problem by means of quiet, behind-the-scenes diplomacy, primarily trying to prevent the situation from deteriorating. Shalom Darwish, secretary of the community in the 1940s, said in the names of the attorney Yosef el-Kabir and Senator Ezra Menahem Daniel, the leaders of the community at the time: 'We have been in Iraq for 2,000 years, and we'll continue to be here for another 2,000 years, quite likely until the messianic era. Therefore, we have to live in peace with the Iraqi people.'[65] And in order to live in peace, the community leaders tried to preserve their image as a religious community and distanced themselves from any political involvement in Iraqi domestic or foreign policy. They fostered personal relationships with top government officials, perhaps in the hope that these relationships would save the Jews in a crisis. This, more than anything else, demonstrates the decline in the status of Iraqi Jewry. The rights they had been granted in accordance with the principles of law and justice were now perceived as privileges dependent on the goodwill of the rulers.

The community leaders were aware of the economic and social problems of the young generation, but their ability to help was limited. They tried to open a technical school to provide vocational training, explaining: This is a political and social need so that not all Jewish boys go into commerce and Civil Service and clerical positions and some go into technical fields.'[66] This attempt was not successful. In 1945, however, a commercial and economic track opened in the Shamash school, as a substitute for academic studies, from which Jewish students were barred. In 1947 the track was made part of the faculty of law in Baghdad. The community leaders believed that the status of the Jews in Iraq depended on preserving their occupational advantages,[67] and they worked to maintain the level and achievements of the Jewish educational system. Among other things, they tried to obtain additional teachers of the English language and literature and of commercial correspondence. But the required teachers did not come to Iraq, and even students who had been sent to London to study refused to return.

The basic weakness of the leadership stemmed from its inability to offer a positive alternative to the situation that prevailed after the integrationist orientation fell apart. All that the leaders could do was to try to preserve what already existed, trying not to be too conspicuous, in the hope that political conditions would improve, tensions would calm down and the community could once again live in peace. But their hopes were dashed, and in late 1947 the political problems grew worse. Then the community leadership found itself forced to express its views on both foreign and domestic affairs. The day after the UN resolved to partition Palestine, the community leadership issued a proclamation denouncing the resolution and expressing its loyalty to the Iraqi homeland. The proclamation was broadcast on the radio and published in all the newspapers. Salman Shina, the member of parliament, noted: 'The Jews took a deep breath. Fortunately, nothing happened to the Jews now.[68]

NOTES

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3. See the letter from the Indian government to the Jewish Agency Political Department, PRO, 24 August 1941, FO371/24116 E-4429.
4. Nissim Kazzaz, *Ha-yehudim be-Iraq ba-me'a ha-esrim* [The Jews in Iraq in the Twentieth Century] (Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 1991), pp. 125–55.
5. 'The Position of Jewry in Iraq', a report prepared by the British embassy in Baghdad, September 1942, PRO, FO624/38/502 XC/A/019332.
6. Yosef Meir, *Me-ever la-midbar: Ha-mahteret ha-halutzit be-Iraq* [Beyond the Desert: The Pioneering Underground in Iraq] (Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defense, 1973), pp. 40–8.
7. See Longrigg, *Iraq,* pp. 298–327; Khadduri, *Independent Iraq,* pp. 245–54; J.Kimche, *Seven Fallen Pillars: The Middle East, 1915–1950* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1950), pp. 83–99.
8. Longrigg, *Iraq,* p. 335.
9. Khadduri, *Independent Iraq,* p. 256; Longrigg, *Iraq,* pp. 337–9; Hana Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq: A Study of Iraq's Old Landed and Commercial Classes and of Its Communists and Ba'thists and Free Officers* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978), pp. 545–57.
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13. Lord Birdwood, *Nuri as-Said: A Study in Arab Leadership* (London: Cassell, 1959), pp. 202–6.
14. Iraqi Parliamentary Commission Inquiry, *Me-ahorei ha-pargod: Va'adat haqira parlamentarit al ha-milhama be-Yisrael* [Behind the Curtain: Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry into the War in Israel], translated into Hebrew by S.Segev (Tel Aviv: Ma'archat, 1954), p. 23.
15. Longrigg, *Iraq,* p. 343.
16. Iraqi Inquiry, *Me-ahorei ha-pargod,* p. 26.
17. Harold Paul Luks, 'Iraqi Jews during World War II', *The Wiener Library Bulletin* 30, no. 43/44 (1977), p. 30.
18. Based on a document by the US ambassador, 31 August 1944, entitled 'Nuri Pasha's Ideas and Plans', in Luks, 'Iraqi Jews', p. 37.
19. Ibid., based on a report by the US delegation to the UN dated 27 September 1947.
20. 'Resolutions of the Political Committee of the League, 19 October 1947', in Iraqi Inquiry, *Me-ahorei ha-pargod,* p. 48.
21. 'Secret Resolutions Adopted by the Political Committee on 16 February 1948', in ibid., pp. 60–1.
22. Luks, 'Iraqi Jews', pp. 30–9.
23. Sereni, meeting of the Aliyah Bet committee, 2 July 1942, Israel Galili files, Haganah Archives.
24. Longrigg, *Iraq,* pp. 329–30.

25. Cornwallis to the State Minister, Cairo, 17 September 1943, PRO, FO371/35038, E5594/87/31.
26. Ma'ozi [Ezra Kadoorie], 28 September 1943, Haganah Archives, 14/19.
27. See remarks at the St James' Conference, 12 February 1939, in D.Ben-Gurion, *Pegishot im manhigim arvi'im* [Meetings with Arab Leaders] (Tel Aviv: 1975), p. 232.
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29. 'Conversation between Nuri al-Said and Jewish Dignitaries from Baghdad', report from Baghdad, 28 January 1943, Central Zionist Archives (CZA), S25/5633.
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34. Golani [Eshel], 27 November 1943, CZA, S25/5290.
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36. Golani, 29 November 1943, Haganah Archives, 14/19.
37. Golani to Yosefon and Eldad [Eshel to Dobkin and Sereni], 6 January 1944, Haganah Archives, 14a/20.
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44. Cornwallis to Eden, 15 April 1944, PRO, FO624/38/502 XC/A/019332.
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46. Luks, 'Iraqi Jews', p. 36.
47. Ibid.
48. Golani, 3 December 1944, Haganah Archives, 14a/20.
49. Meir Shilon [Shlank] to Atara [Jewish Agency Political Department], 4 May 1946, Haganah Archives, 14/24; Salman Shina, *Mi-Bavel le-Tziyyon: Zikhronot ve-hashqafot* [From Babylonia to Zion: Memories and Outlooks] (Tel Aviv: n.p., 1955), p. 135.
50. Baghdad to FO, 28 June 1945, PRO, FO371/45334 E4946.
51. Mr Thompson to FO, 22 August 1945, PRO, E-6153; Thompson to FO, 25 August, 1945, PRO, FO371/45379 E-6283; Thompson to FO, 28 August 1945, PRO, FO371/45379 E-6335.
52. Shilon to Atara (Political Department), 15 November 1945, CZA, S25/3529.
53. Longrigg, *Iraq*, pp. 330, 335.
54. Ibid., p. 339.
55. Meir, *Me-ever la-midbar*, p. 127.
56. Yitzhak Bar-Moshe, *Yetzi'at Iraq* [Exodus from Iraq] (Jerusalem: Va'ad Adat Haspharadim, 1977), pp. 162–3.
57. PRO, FO624/38/502.
58. Boaz to Giladi and Atara [Shilon to Eliahu Elath and Eliahu Sasson in the Political Department], 29 May 1945, Haganah Archives, 14a/22.
59. Letter to Atara (Political Department), 5 July 1945, Haganah Archives, 14/22.
60. To Atara, 15 November 1945, CZA, S25/3529.
61. Meeting of the coordinating secretariat, Tel Aviv, 7 October 1947, Hakibbutz Hameuhad Archives, Yad Tabenkin, division 1b, container 8, file 34.

62. Shina, *Mi-Bavel le-Tziyyon*, pp. 130–1.
63. T.Darwish, *Yehudei Iraq ba-kalkala* [Iraqi Jewry in the Economy] (Tel Aviv: 1986/87), pp. 61–9; el-Kabir, 'My Communal Life', p. 140.
64. 'To the Hehalutz Department and others, from Shamai [Hillel]', 27 May 1947, CZA, S86/322.
65. Shalom Darwish, 'Ha-yahasim bein mosedot ha-qehila le-vein ha-mahteret ha-halutzit be-Baghdad' [Relations Between the Community Institutions and the Pioneering Underground in Baghdad], in Z.Yehuda (ed.), *Mi-Bavel li-Yerushalayim* [From Babylonia to Jerusalem] (Or Yehuda: The Babylonian Jewry Heritage Center, 1980), p. 83.
66. President of the school committee to the secretary of the Anglo-Jewish Association, 21 December 1945, Anglo-Jewish Association Archive, box 8, file no. 3AJ37/3/2/1.
67. El-Kabir, 'My Communal Life', pp. 141–2.
68. Shina, *Mi-Bavel le-Tziyyon*, p. 132.

2
The Reversal in Zionist Policy vis-à-vis the Jews of Islamic Countries

THE JEWS OF ISLAMIC COUNTRIES AND ZIONIST POLICY UNTIL 1941

It was during World War II that the Zionist movement in Palestine first developed a significant commitment to the Jews in Islamic countries, although the existence of these Jews was not foreign to the Yishuv leadership. The socialist Zionists had been in contact with Mizrahi Jews since the Second Aliyah. The labour movement leaders were aware of Mizrahi communities in the old neighbourhoods of Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, and other cities, but most of these Mizrahim were generally not perceived as a part of Yishuv society. As Eliyahu Dobkin, head of the Jewish Agency Immigration Department, explained in 1943:

> Despite the fact that they are so close to us geographically they are foreign and distant, and the foreignness is mutual. In the past twenty years, these Jews have been cut off from us much more than any other Jewish collective.[1]

Nevertheless, some Zionist activity, with an emphasis on Hebrew-Zionist education, took place in the 1920s and 1930s in most Islamic countries. In Iraq it encompassed a few dozen members, most of them in Baghdad.

However, for demographic, political, ideological and cultural reasons, the Zionist establishment did not perceive the Jews of Islamic countries as having significant Zionist potential. In the late 1930s, they numbered approximately 750,000 and constituted less than 4 per cent of the world Jewish population. Iraqi Jewry accounted for only 0.7 per cent of the Jewish people. Furthermore, the 1920s and 1930s were a time of political progress and economic prosperity for the Jews of the Middle East and North Africa. For most of them it was an era of emancipation, modern education and an improved standard of living, and few were interested in Zionism and emigration to Palestine.[2]

In contrast, millions of Jews in eastern and central Europe were suffering from economic strangulation, social discrimination and political persecution, and these troubles increased in scope and intensity in the mid-1930s, after Hitler's rise to power in Germany. The plight of European Jewry commanded the interest and commitment of the Zionist movement. Zionism drew its strength and its human reserve from European Jewry. It was in Europe that the movement had been founded and its ideology had taken shape. Zionist societies, organizations, political parties and youth movements had been functioning there for decades. At their initiative, and as a result of their activity, money and people poured in to build up the land, and the leaders of the movement emerged from their ranks. Under these circumstances, it was only natural that the World Zionist

Organization would focus on the wellsprings from which it obtained its material and human resources. Most of the immigration certificates held by the Zionist Executive were distributed in Europe.

Moreover, in the early 1920s the Mandatory government had imposed quotas for single, healthy but destitute immigrants, aged 18–35, affiliated with the labour movement. The quotas were set by the British in accordance with the economic absorption capacity of the country, and the Zionist Executive was empowered to distribute the immigration certificates. But because the number of applications for immigration certificates far exceeded the quota, the Zionist Executive had to set criteria for selecting immigrants. Its criteria were ideological: it gave preference to members of Zionist youth movements who had undergone vocational and ideological training through the pioneering movements. These movements held the ethos of physical labour sacrosanct as the foundation and necessary condition for rectification of the Jewish individual and Jewish society and for achieving national renewal. They also repudiated Jewish history in the Diaspora and the occupations that were perceived as typical of Diaspora Jewish life: shopkeeping, peddling, acting as middlemen and trade. Their members spent time on training farms, learned Hebrew, and prepared themselves to perform arduous physical labour and to carry out all the missions on which the Zionist establishment might send them.

The selective immigration criteria meant that all Jewish collectives that did not conduct pioneering Zionist activity were disqualified from immigrating. These Jews were defined as inappropriate 'human material' for immigration. Because Zionist activity was on a small scale in Iraq, as in other Islamic countries, the pioneering movements were not active there at all and there were no training farms, consequently there was little chance of obtaining a significant number of immigration certificates.[3]

In addition to the demographic, political and ideological factors, there was also a cultural hierarchy. Zionism, as a modern national movement, was founded in Europe in the late nineteenth century, and along with the ideas of the Enlightenment and nationalism, it absorbed the notion of a cultural hierarchy derived from the colonialist world of values as it was shaped in the encounter between western culture and other cultures. According to this conception, as the historian Yaron Tsur showed, the natural differences between nations produce a hierarchy with European cultures at the top and the cultures of all other nations below them.[4] The Zionist pioneers sought to erase their Diaspora past, but they did not want to give up their European culture. As a result, underneath and alongside the ethnic-national ethos of Zionism, which promised to treat all Jews in all Diaspora communities equally, there was a latent ethos that regarded the culture of Islamic countries as 'Levantine', that is, characterized by superficial education, merely external manners, no real cultural foundation, and intellectual instability.[5]

Implicit in this conception is concern for the fate of the exemplary society that socialist Zionism sought to establish. Not all Jews were deemed worthy of immigrating to Palestine during the formative stages of the national home. Anyone who failed to satisfy the ideological and cultural criteria of socialist Zionism was perceived as liable to damage or even destroy the exemplary Zionist society. Thus, the Jews of Islamic countries could be included in Yishuv society only if they accepted both Zionist ideology and its cultural features. As Oz Almog puts it in *The Sabra: A Profile:* This step up included, from the standpoint of the veteran Yishuv, a rise from the Eastern culture,

which it considered backwards, to the developed Western culture',[6] or more precisely, Ashcenazic culture.

Despite receiving few immigration certificates, thousands of Jews from Arab countries—Iraq, Syria and Lebanon, Egypt, Turkey and Yemen—arrived in Palestine between the two world wars. The November 1948 census counted approximately 80,000 Jewish natives of Arab countries, including 21,000 who immigrated between 1919 and 1939 (among them 5,000 natives of Iraq).[7]

These immigrants came for religious, messianic, economic, family, and other reasons. The vast majority sneaked across the border and lived in Palestine illegally They settled in the Mizrahi areas on the outskirts of the major cities, many of them in Jerusalem and a smaller number in Tel Aviv. They worked in crafts, in commerce, as peddlers and as middlemen of various sorts as they had done in their native lands. Their connection with the Yishuv establishment was limited because they objected to the secularism of the Zionist movement and the strange mentality and culture that they encountered in contacts with the Zionist bureaucracy The Zionist establishment perceived the immigrants from Islamic countries as unproductive elements who did not contribute the desired labour and did not integrate into the organized Yishuv.

The exception was the attitude toward the Yemenite and Kurdish communities. The few immigration certificates allotted to Iraq were given to Kurdish Jews, even though they were a small minority (about 10 per cent) of Iraqi Jewry, had no Zionist education whatsoever and had little general or Jewish education. Most of the immigrants, however, arrived without immigration certificates. Approximately 2,000 Kurdish Jews arrived in the 1920s (out of 3,300 immigrants from Iraq during that period). They reached Syria on passports, crossed to Sidon, and were smuggled into Safed on donkeys. Most of them settled in Jerusalem and worked in arduous occupations: as porters, donkey drivers, quarriers, construction workers or masons. Some of them worked in agriculture in the old farming villages.[8]

Immigrants also came from Yemen, most of them with immigration certificates. On the eve of independence, the Yemenite community in Palestine numbered approximately 28,000. The vast majority were concentrated in Tel Aviv, Jerusalem and the agricultural villages on the coastal plain, from Zikhron Ya'aqov to Rehovot. They were also prominent in low-paying, labour-intensive occupations, such as agriculture and construction work of various sorts, including building, carpentry and plumbing. The Yemenite women worked almost exclusively as housekeepers.

The Yemenites and Kurds were perceived as satisfying the operative criteria in the labour-movement ideology Although, as Razabi notes about the Yemenites in Kinneret in the 1920s, they did not share its ideology and they essentially 'bore…all the markers of the Jew against which the young pioneers had rebelled in shaping the new Jewish utopia'.[9] Although they meticulously observed the religious precepts and maintained the traditional way of life that the pioneers had challenged, and although their motivation for immigrating was not the national ideology but first and foremost religious consciousness and messianic impulses, the Zionist establishment perceived them as workers, and they thus fulfilled the principle of labour in practice. Presumably, the Kurds and Yemenites took arduous manual-labour work because that was what was available, and they had no choice. Thus they were 'natural labourers' and never part of the Zionist vanguard.

Nevertheless, unlike the other Mizrahim, they were perceived as contributing to the development of the national home, or at least not detracting from it.

To sum up, by the late 1930s the images that the Zionist establishment in Palestine and the Jews of Islamic countries had of each other, as well as their patterns of action towards each other, were already framed. Although the latter were perceived as part of the Jewish people, they were regarded as the less important, less advanced, culturally Levantine part that, due to its cultural inferiority, had only a limited contribution to make to the revival of the nation; until they adopted western culture and resembled Europeans, it was believed, they could not contribute to establishing Zionist society in Palestine. Alongside the cultural rejection, the ideological features of socialist Zionism also played a part. The Jews of Islamic countries were portrayed as having human potential unsuited to settlement, to the labour movement and to Yishuv society Consequently, the Yishuv was not interested in them.

It should be noted that the pioneers' perception was a particularistic one that ran counter to Herzlian and socialist Zionist and Socialist principles altogether. It was particularly prevalent among the young pioneers, although even among them it was not universal. The most prominent dissenting voice was that of Ben-Gurion, who wondered—in the context of discrimination by the Zionist institutions against the Yemenites with respect to settlement and employment—about the contradiction between the pioneers' particularistic value system and the national, inclusive value system of the Zionist movement.[10]

The Jews in Islamic countries were not aware of the ideological principles and criteria behind the World Zionist Organization's immigration policy. They did not understand them and, of course, could not agree with them, because these criteria left them outside the Zionist circle. Nevertheless, as a result of the East-West dichotomy and exposure to the cultural hierarchy introduced by European colonialism, the Mizrahi immigrants interpreted the Zionist establishment's attitude toward them as ethnic discrimination by the Ashkenazic establishment against Mizrahim. Hence, any initiative would be dependent on a change in the condition and status of the Jews of Islamic countries, of the Yishuv and of the Jewish people and the Zionist movement. Only if these paradigms developed a crack or were shattered could there be a turnabout in the Yishuv's relations with the Jews of Islamic countries.

THE ONE MILLION PLAN

Following the outbreak of World War II, there was a growing influx of information about Jewish communities throughout the Middle East and North Africa. In addition, awareness increased of the existence of political, economic and social problems with the status of these Jewish collectives.

The first landmark in the emergence of this awareness may be seen in the pogrom against the Jews of Baghdad in June 1941 (the Farhud). The leaders of the Yishuv were shocked by the violence—because it was new and unusual, because it was the most serious security-related incident that had occurred until then in Jewish-Muslim relations in the modern era, and because of the brutality involved.

The Zionist establishment in Palestine was also worried about the fate of the Jews of the Levant when the situation of the latter worsened under the Vichy regime and when the British captured Syria in July 1941. The progress of the war in North Africa and the transfer of large territories from one occupier to another focused attention on the Jewish communities in Libya, Algeria, Morocco and, especially, Tunisia under Nazi occupation.

Soldiers and workers from Palestine who were in these countries with the British army did much to transmit information about the Jewish communities. Among the recruits were a few high-ranking members of the labour settlement movements and labour parties, who reported to the National Institutions on their impressions of the condition of Jewish communities in the Middle East and their attitude toward Zionism and immigration to Palestine. Others dispatched reports and letters depicting life in the shadow of antisemitism, poverty, cultural degradation and a strong yearning for the Land of Israel.[11] In mid-1942, Aliya Bet (the organization for clandestine immigration to Palestine) began to send emissaries to Iraq, Iran, Syria and Lebanon, and in the summer of 1943 the first emissaries set out for North Africa. On their frequent visits to Palestine, the emissaries reported to leading figures and the political decision-making entities in the Yishuv on the communities to which they were posted.

Moreover, the very fact that political parties and organizations from Palestine established branches in Middle Eastern and North African countries, as well as the entrenchment of these branches in the Jewish communities, heightened awareness of the options for activity there. This was significant both in countries where Zionist activity was continuous, such as Syria, Egypt and the Maghreb, and in countries where Zionist activity resumed after a break, such as Iraq and Iran, because in all of them there was a qualitative and quantitative change in the intensivity and scope of the activity, in the quantity of emissaries from Palestine, and in the assessment of potential activity and its chances.

From the emissaries' reports, the Yishuv leaders learned that there was significant human potential in the Islamic countries, but also that very few would come to Palestine—and even those few would not join the labour settlements—unless they were exposed to socialist-Zionist education. The conclusion was the National Institutions in Palestine and the Zionist movements in the countries in question had to make special preparations so that the Zionist activity would meet the specific needs of the Jewish communities and connect them to the needs of Palestine.

However, the increased scope, budgets, weight and importance of Zionist activity in Islamic countries in those years were not a departure from the routine Zionist policy of bringing over young pioneers loyal to Zionist ideology and to the settlement system. Because activity in Europe was impossible, the Yishuv emissaries focused on Middle Eastern and North African countries and worked on bringing over young members of the Zionist movements. Their attitude in this respect was similar to the Zionist attitude toward the Yemenites: so long as 'positive' immigrants arrived in limited numbers and did not detract from the regular influx of pioneers from Europe, the Zionist institutions were not averse to giving them immigration certificates. Presumably, after the war they would again focus on European Jewry

In this stage, awareness of the presence of Jews in Islamic countries, of their worsening political status and security situation, did not bring an essential change in the Zionist policy toward them. This change would happen only after the Holocaust.

In November 1942, the Yishuv leadership began to absorb the full significance of the Holocaust. As time passed, word spread of the scope of the catastrophe. The Jews in Palestine realized that by the end of the war a substantial portion of European Jewry—perhaps the vast majority—would be dead.

Remarks by Zionist leaders in 1943 were already indicating a reversal in Zionist policy vis-à-vis the Jews of Islamic countries. One of these leaders was Eliyahu Dobkin, the head of the Immigration Department, who spoke of the ramifications of the immigration situation and about the Yishuv's attitude towards the 774,000 Jews in Islamic countries (North Africa, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Yemen and Turkey):

> These exiles have become more valuable in the present era from several standpoints: (a) We do not know how many Jews will be left in Europe after the campaign to exterminate them and how many of them we will be able to be in touch with, because millions will quite likely remain under Soviet Russian rule and will be torn from us for a long time. Therefore the quantitative value of these three-quarters of a million Jews has risen to the level of a valuable political factor among world Jewry. (b) We all know the simple truth that the entire secret of our policy today is to augment our strength by increasing the Jewish population in Palestine, and these Jews will clearly be the first to join us, preceding Jewish collectives from Europe. (c) It is easier to reach them—we are not separated by seas and war fronts—and it is easier for them to reach Palestine, too.[12]

Dobkin went on to express an overarching objective: 'We can sum up our job vis-à-vis these Jews in one phrase: Zionist conquest of these exiles in order to liquidate them and transfer them to Palestine.'[13] Remarks by Ben-Gurion in 1943, also allude to a new political plan taking shape:

> The matter of activity among these large Jewish collectives [the Jews of Islamic countries], which history has placed in one of the most dangerous locations of all, is now becoming a political issue… and Zionist policy—not only immigration policy and not only our pioneering policy, but political Zionism, too—requires work among these Jews.[14]

This political Zionism was articulated in detail in the 'One Million Plan', which originated in plans expressed by Ben-Gurion in the mid-1930s and fleshed out in late 1942, after the adoption of the Biltmore Resolution. Ben-Gurion spoke of two million European Jews immigrating at the end of the war. When the demographic significance of the Holocaust became clear and it was realized that the Jews whose distress Zionism was supposed to relieve would no longer be alive at the end of the war, the Zionist movement faced what its leadership perceived as the thorniest dilemma in its history, casting doubt on the justification for its continued existence. Ben-Gurion explained the problem: 'This fact, the annihilation of six million Jews…is liable to destroy the very foundations of Zionism and the Zionist claim, too.'[15]

At a meeting of the Jewish Agency Executive on 28 September 1944, Ben-Gurion explained:

> We are now on the verge of the end of the war, and most Jews have been annihilated. There is now the most important, most practical justification for a non-Zionist solution, because there are no Jews. There has never been such an anti-Zionist weapon. Everyone is asking himself: where will we get Jews for Palestine? We are facing what may be the last decisive hour: yes to Palestine or no to Palestine for the Jews![16]

However, neither Ben-Gurion nor any of the other leaders were willing to give up on Zionism and on the establishment of a Jewish state. On the contrary, the Holocaust reinforced their belief in the Zionist idea, underscored the political weakness of Zionism, and made it clear that a Jewish state was essential. Consequently, Ben-Gurion's only question was arithmetic: would enough Jews be found in the world who were willing and able to immigrate to Palestine to make possible the establishment of the Jewish state? His answer related to the Biltmore Program: 'My minimum used to be two million; now that we have been annihilated I say one million.'

To examine ways of implementing the One Million Plan, Ben-Gurion appointed the Planning Committee, a committee of experts that was to look into how the economy of Palestine could support a million Jews.[17] On 24 June 1944, however, the plan was presented to the Jewish Agency Executive. It was presented not as an operative plan, since the White Paper policy was in effect in Palestine at the time, but in the political context, in effort to formulate the demands that the Zionist movement would submit to the Allies at the end of the war: 'The real content of our demand is to bring one million Jews to Palestine immediately' Ben-Gurion's demand had three parts to it: legal immigration, Jewish control of immigration and the establishment of Palestine as a Jewish state within a short period of time. The plan would be financed by a grant or loan from Britain and the United States, as well as financial reparations from Germany to the Jewish people for the purpose of building up the land. The arrival of the immigrants would be rapid and independent of the pace of their absorption, which would take much longer. The initial candidates for immigration under Ben-Gurion's plan were the 500, 000 Jewish refugees in Europe, who would be dependent on the victors anyway He insisted that they should be brought to Palestine and supported until they were absorbed, or, as he put it, 'a soup kitchen [should be] opened for them in Palestine'. Next, all the Jews in Arab and North African countries—those 800, 000 people who were at 'risk of annihilation and of *human and cultural degeneration* as well' should be brought to Palestine. 'In my opinion,' Ben-Gurion summed up,

> the Zionist program today requires the bringing over of a million Jews, the political right to this, and financial aid. To accomplish this, we need a plan for transporting them, for housing them temporarily, for bringing [them over]—all these are awesome issues. From the minuscule immigrations in the recent past, we see the difficulties in this: especially if we bring over Jews from Arab countries—large families, a different way of life… Nevertheless, we want to create a Jewish nation and we will have to work under catastrophic conditions.[18]

Interestingly, Ben-Gurion cites political and rational reasons for bringing Jewish displaced persons from Europe, whereas in discussing the immigration of the Jews from Islamic countries he mentions not only a political and rational reason, but also a cultural-orientalist explanation, since the 'degeneration' of the East was one of the basic elements of this perception.

It should be noted that, although Ben-Gurion spoke of the immigration of all the Jews of Islamic countries, the Planning Committee was thinking of 150,000 immigrants—that is, about 20 per cent of these Jews. As the dimensions of the catastrophe in Europe became clearer, the share of Jews from Islamic countries in the plan was increased.[19] On 30 July 1945, Ben-Gurion made a list in his diary of the Jewish communities left in the world and stated: 'We have to bring over all of Bloc 5 [the Jews of Islamic countries], most of Bloc 4 [Western Europe], everything possible from Bloc 3 [Eastern Europe], and pioneers from Bloc 2 [the Jews of English-speaking countries] as soon as possible.'[20]

Despite the inclusion of the Jews of Islamic countries, the Zionist leadership assumed that the Holocaust survivors would be the prime motivators of the plan, chiefly because the western nations would suffer pangs of conscience when the dimensions of the Holocaust became clear. And Ben-Gurion was determined to make sure that the West found out about the dimensions of the catastrophe. He also thought that depicting the problem of the Holocaust survivors as a humanitarian, philanthropic issue might persuade the United States to help carry out the plan, thereby solving the troublesome, annoying problem of having to deal with the tens of thousands of Jewish displaced persons who had begun to gather in the American occupation zone in Germany.

From this standpoint, the inclusion of the Jews of Islamic countries in the One Million Plan was problematic. At the time it was generally thought that the Jews were living in relative peace and tranquillity under the protection of the tolerant Muslim crescent, and that including them in the plan would mark them with a Zionist stamp, turn the Arab governments and their Arab populations against them, and put them at risk. Moreover, mentioning the Jews of Islamic countries in the Zionist context was liable to conflict with the humanitarian and philanthropic argument for moving the European refugees to Palestine and thus to disclose a distinctly nationalist ambition for political independence. In this respect, including the Jews of Islamic countries in the One Million Plan might block American support and jeopardize the realization of the Zionist programme.

Ben-Gurion was aware of these arguments, but he believed that a demand for the immigration of the European refugees only would not ensure a Jewish majority, would not allow for the formation of a sustainable political entity, and would ultimately even exacerbate the conflict between Jews and Arabs in Palestine. It was doubtful whether the United States would agree to lend its hand to such a development. For this reason, Ben-Gurion believed, the Yishuv could not pass up the opportunity to call for immigration from Islamic countries. These Jews were to play a central role in creating a critical mass of population in Palestine so as to ensure the establishment of a sustainable Jewish state. Thus Ben-Gurion used both the distress of the Jewish refugees in Europe and the political distress of the Jews of Islamic countries for the Zionist cause, ignoring the internal contradiction between the two in favour of the establishment of a Jewish state. He also set priorities for immigration, however, reflecting the human and political centrality of the problem of the Holocaust refugees: 'The remnants of the Jews in Europe take precedence,' Ben-Gurion said in concluding a meeting of the Jewish Agency Executive.[21]

Inherent in the One Million Plan was a radical paradigm shift in the practical and ideological spheres, involving a change in attitudes that had occurred in the 1920s and 1930s and had moulded the social and ideological image of Yishuv society. The concept of 'selective immigration', which, both for ideological reasons and because only a few of the many applicants for immigration could be chosen, preferred young Ashkenazic pioneers over other Jews, gave way to the exact opposite: mass immigration by every Jew who wanted to come, irrespective of age, sex, occupation and health. It was clear that the immigrants from Europe would arrive destitute, ill, and broken, whereas the Jews from Islamic countries would come with large families, including children and the elderly, a substantial percentage of sick, poor people with no western education and even without any education at all, and culture and values that were different from and foreign to the Yishuv. The population that had until then been rejected entirely by the Zionists now formed the basis for the establishment of a sustainable state. In 1944, however, the notion of selective immigration seemed inhumane and anti-national in view of the annihilation of one third of the Jewish people and Zionism's desperate need for immigrants. But in 1951, at the height of the wave of mass immigration to Israel, when the demographic problem was perceived as less severe than it had been a few years before, Israel re-adopted a policy of selective immigration, which it applied chiefly to the Jews of North Africa. By then, however, Israel already had close to 1.5 million Jews.

Hence, the inclusion of the Jews of Islamic countries in Zionist activity stemmed from historical circumstances that were not specifically related to these Jews. The situation was well put by Eliyahu Lulu (Hacarmeli), who represented the Mizrahim on the executive committee of the Histadrut (General Federation of Jewish Labour): 'We forgot the eastern lands, and we cannot brag of having discovered them. Cruel life compelled us to discover them.'[22]

It should be kept in mind, however, that those same historical circumstances affected the Jewish communities in Islamic countries, too: the travails that they experienced as a result of extensive antisemitic propaganda, the rise of pro-Nazi and antisemitic forces and occupation by Axis troops or their supporters. Some communities had undergone pogroms and fears of more pogroms, and all of them were influenced by the threatening shadow of the Holocaust as a precedent for the annihilation of Jews. All these shocked the Jewish communities and magnified their fears for the future, while also reinforcing a sense of Jewish solidarity and interest in the Zionist enterprise in Palestine.

THE DANGER DILEMMA

One of the issues that came up in the discussions of the One Million Plan was that of the security of the Jews in Islamic countries. This issue had been on the Zionist agenda since the pogrom against the Jews of Baghdad and reports of antisemitic manifestations in Arab countries. The Yishuv leadership warned repeatedly that the Jews in Arab countries could expect to be wiped out and should be rescued at any cost. Dobkin referred to this in a speech to the Mapai central committee in July 1943:

> I don't know whether these Jews have any sense of what awaits them, but we have to look at it with open eyes. The very same day that brings

> redemption and salvation to European Jewry will be the most dangerous day of all for the exiles in Arab lands. When Zionism enters the stage of fulfillment and we are engaged in our campaign for the Zionist solution in Palestine, these Jews will face great danger, danger of terrible slaughter, which will make the slaughter in Europe look less terrible than it looks today. Our first task is therefore to save these Jews.[23]

This description gives an indication of the impact of the Holocaust on Zionist interpretations. At the same time, because Dobkin made his remarks as an introduction to his efforts to persuade the Mapai central committee to support the 'Uniform Pioneer Plan' (see below), it seems that these remarks may be regarded as one of the first cases of the use of the Holocaust to achieve a political objective.

Ben-Gurion, too, was worried about the security situation, as we see from his remarks in 1943:

> In many respects the issue of the Jews of eastern lands has now appeared on the Zionist agenda: (a) because of the catastrophe that took place in Europe—and we do not know what will become of European Jewry; (b) because of the catastrophe that the Jews in eastern lands are expected to face as a result of Zionism. This is the only segment of Jewry in the world that is liable to be a victim of Zionism; therefore we have a special responsibility toward them…[24]

In retrospect, it should be noted that these gloomy forecasts proved false. Although the status and security of the Jews in Arab countries worsened significantly, and they suffered political and economic persecution—especially in the tense period of the War of Independence—there were no massacres, and there was no danger to Jewish survival. Although the Jews experienced bloody incidents in Cairo (November 1945 and June to November 1948), Tripoli (4–7 November 1945), Aden (1947) and Morocco (1947), and although local army and police forces took part in these incidents, overall the attacks were limited in scope and were not the result of a government policy or initiative.

Why, then, the gloomy forecast?

It should be kept in mind that the assessments of the Yishuv leadership were informed first and foremost by the impressions of the emissaries to Arab countries, and these impressions were negative, perhaps due to the catastrophic Zionist worldview during and after the Holocaust, and perhaps because they were trying to wake up the Yishuv establishment and spur it to increase its activity in Islamic countries. Moreover, the acts of brutality committed by Arabs against helpless Jews in the Farhud, and even earlier, in massacres in Hebron and elsewhere, gave rise in Palestine to the assumption that increased tension over the Palestine problem would result in large-scale slaughter of the Jews of Islamic countries. And if such brutality seemed to the Zionist leaders from Europe as something to be expected of Arabs but not of 'civilized' nations such as the Germans, after the Holocaust it was clear that the worst should be expected, especially given the view that the national conflict over Palestine was a more real and stronger motivation for hatred of Jews than European antisemitism. The situation in Europe, where the war gave free rein to the murderers, now seemed likely to recur given the

hostility in Arab countries toward the helpless Jews, the mounting tension in Palestine and in Arab countries and the apathy of the West. These were the first conclusions that Zionism drew from the Holocaust, and they evoked pessimism and gloomy predictions.

The predictions turned out to be doomful exaggerations. The analogy drawn between the Arabs and the Nazis was unquestionably unfair to the Arabs and their governments. However, deterioration of the situation may have been prevented by the news of the annihilation of European Jewry; after this shock, western public opinion was no longer tolerant of similar manifestations in Arab countries, which were still within the British sphere of influence. The revelation of the political power of American Jewry after the Holocaust and the establishment of the State of Israel may also have acted as deterrents and kept the situation from deteriorating.

For our purposes, it is totally irrelevant whether and to what extent the danger was real; what matters is its impact on the inclusion of the Jews of Islamic countries in the One Million Plan. This impact is illustrated by a meeting of the Jewish Agency Executive, during which the members of the Executive addressed the issue in view of the troubling information and pessimistic assessments. Ben-Gurion described the situation as follows:

> The Arab residents of Baghdad are openly making preparations for massacre. In Egypt, too, the condition of the Jews is getting worse. The plight of Yemenite Jewry is among the best known; now Turkish Jewry is also being destroyed… There is also political danger in Arab countries. If we do not do away with Iraqi Jewry in the Zionist manner, there is a danger that it will be done away with in the Hitlerian manner.[25]

The Zionist perception of the security situation of the Jews of Islamic countries elicited objections to the plan from some of the participants in the discussion. Although they did not cast doubt on the need and national obligation to include the Jews of these countries in the plan, they objected to Ben-Gurion's proposal to proclaim this officially. Such a declaration, they maintained, might put these Jews at risk; also the One Million Plan was not about to be carried immediately, as long as the White Paper policy was in effect and the governments of neighbouring Arab countries barred Jewish immigration. Even from a Zionist perspective, they were not candidates for immediate immigration; they were preceded by European Jewry So why endanger them?

Sharett's [Shertok] answer was one of principle: he spoke of the 'reckoning of the hour' versus the 'reckoning of the generations' and of a'universal Jewish' approach that demanded the inclusion of the Jews of Islamic countries in the political plan. Ben-Gurion seconded this principle and noted that the dilemma had begun in the days of Herzl. He acknowledged that a public announcement could exacerbate the condition of the Jews, but he insisted that their situation was bad anyway He explained his decision as follows:

> If we are afraid to take responsibility for this, we have to take responsibility for the slaughter of Iraqi Jewry Perhaps not the Jews of Turkey, perhaps not the Jews of Egypt—the Egyptians are not used to this—but the Iraqis are used to it and will slaughter the Jews in a single day. I am not afraid that it will aggravate the condition of the Jews: if a

> Jew gets angry at us, let him get angry. Regarding responsibility, I reached my final conclusion when I was in Sejera and saw my two comrades killed before my very eyes; it was then that I concluded that Zionism is something responsible. When I call on a Jew to come here I am taking responsibility for his life, and I will not be deterred. I foresee a greater catastrophe for Iraqi Jewry than if I talk about bringing them to Palestine and their plight is worsened.[26]

An analysis of Ben-Gurion's answer points up an internal contradiction. He claimed that the Jews of Islamic countries were in danger and recognized that declaring them candidates to link up with the Zionists could exacerbate their situation. He was also aware that such a declaration would be made unilaterally, without consulting the Jews of Islamic countries themselves, and might anger these Jews. Nevertheless, he was not willing to forgo the declaration. He explained this by saying that 'Zionism is something responsible', by which he meant that the fulfilment of Zionism has its inevitable price, which is required of Zionists and non-Zionists alike. Because the One Million Plan relied on a numerical element, Ben-Gurion could not forgo the Mizrahim. Without them there was no chance of establishing a state. Consequently, in the name of Jewish nationalism, he appropriated the Jews of Islamic countries for Zionism, on the assumption that Zionism knew the needs and interests of these Jews best. These interests, as he saw them, coincided with those of Zionism. Ben-Gurion explained this appropriation by stating that the Jews in Islamic countries could expect catastrophe anyway and the decisive issue was whether Zionism would eventually be able to lead these collectives to Palestine. This viewpoint expresses not only the primacy of Zionism in relation to the Diaspora, but also a sober basic assumption that the Jews of Islamic countries would need the State of Israel no less and perhaps more urgently that it needed them.

Another way of describing this appropriation was pointed out by the historian Dalia Ofer: 'To [Ben-Gurion], there was an absolute unity of fate between the Jewish people in Palestine and the nation in the Diaspora, which required a set of shared action guidelines to ensure Jewish survival by means of Zionist fulfillment in Palestine.'[27]

The question is whether Diaspora Jewry shared this perception of the unity of fate, and how much weight was ascribed to the Diaspora and its needs in setting Zionist policy As for the Jews of Islamic countries, it is doubtful whether they shared this view.

It is ironic that when the Zionist movement, for the first time, came to regard the Jews of Islamic countries as an integral part of the Zionist enterprise and even decided to declare this publicly it did so in the knowledge that it was liable to harm these Jews and accelerate an exacerbation of their status. Ben-Gurion was willing to take both the risk and the responsibility for this, just as the Zionist movement took other risks to achieve its political goals. Hence, the Holocaust only reinforced the Zionist awareness of the centrality and priority of Palestine, with one difference—instead of having its needs served by the Diaspora, Palestine would be built up by the elimination of the Diaspora. This is how both the Holocaust survivors in Europe and the Jews in Islamic countries were perceived.

In any case, the discussion in the Jewish Agency Executive shows that the One Million Plan was the product of Zionist needs and interests and that the issue of the danger to the Jews of Islamic countries, which at the time conflicted with the One Million

Plan, was considered to be of secondary importance. Apparently, the Yishuv leaders themselves did not believe that the danger was immediate or substantial.

THE ONE MILLION PLAN AND THE OPERATIVE POLICY OF ZIONISM

From both a political and an operative perspective, the One Million Plan had no immediate significance; its importance was on the level of principle, because it reflected the attitude of the Zionist institutions toward the Jews of Islamic countries as potential citizens of the Jewish state, a commitment to their welfare and safety and acknowledgment of the importance of Zionist activity among them. This message—that Palestine wanted Jewish immigrants from Islamic countries—came through loud and clear, and its echoes could be heard in all the Jewish communities in these countries.

After it was presented to the Jewish Agency Executive, the One Million Plan became the official policy of the Zionist leadership. The immigration of the Jews of Islamic countries was explicit or implicit in all the declarations, testimonies, memoranda and demands issued by the Jewish Agency from World War II until the establishment of the state. For example, a memorandum submitted to the High Commissioner on 18 June 1945 calls for permission for the immediate immigration of 100,000 European Jewish refugees and of Jews from Islamic countries, 'from Morocco to Iran and from Istambul to Aden'.[28]

Throughout the memoranda and proclamations, the immigration of the Mizrahim appears as a secondary issue, in a sentence appended to demands focusing on the problem of the Holocaust survivors and the issue of Palestine. The demand to bring over the Jews of Islamic countries was not successful in the international arena, but it had an impact in the intra-Zionist realm: a revision of priorities, allocation of resources and the formation of new circumstances for Zionism. The main tasks in the first stage, prior to the establishment of the state, were organizational, ideological and cultural.

Making mass immigration from Islamic countries a political objective required preparations to ensure that the immigrants would actually come. In the course of Zionist activity during World War II, the Yishuv leaders had discovered that the Jews in these countries were not clamouring to emigrate, that there was no comprehensive Zionist activity there and that the Zionist cadre active there was extremely limited in scope and in its ability to have an impact. Moreover, as the cultural differences between Jewish society in Islamic countries and in the Yishuv became clear, the Yishuv leadership realized that Zionism had to deal with one of the most complex tasks in its history—creating a nation out of a variety of Jewish population groups with different histories and different cultures. This task was assigned to the pioneering movements, which were called upon to sow the seeds of Zionist culture among these Jewish collectives, in order to create a basis for a single nation with shared basic values.

The first organizational measure was the Jewish Agency's decision to offer a course for emissaries who would then be posted to Islamic countries. In the second half of 1943, a general plan of action was drawn up. Entitled The Uniform Pioneer to the Eastern Lands', the plan proclaimed the concept of an ingathering of exiles and the revival of the Jewish people in Palestine as its central theme. It called for education towards immigration, the study of Hebrew and 'a life of labour', that is, physical labour,

especially agriculture. The idea was to standardize the activity of the various pioneering movements in Islamic countries by demarcating the subject matter that they would teach, and especially by eliminating the unique subject matter, or 'hues', of each of the pioneering movements.

To ensure implementation of the plan, it was decided that the emissaries would be sent out by the Jewish Agency Immigration Department and that it, not the Histadrut—as had been the case until then—would be responsible for the enterprise. Similarly it was decided that after arriving in Palestine, the immigrants would be divided up among the various forms of settlement by a party or movement-key to be determined in advance. Basically, this plan was intended to help Mapai, which was beset by conflict and on the brink of an internal split, to ensure its hegemony in and outside the labour movement. The transfer of the Uniform Pioneer Plan from the Histadrut to the Jewish Agency where Mapai had a majority, was one measure in the party's struggle against its political rivals within the labour movement and was intended to delegitimize activity by political parties and organizations outside the World Zionist Organization, such as the Revisionists, Etzel and Lehi.

Aside from reflecting the struggles within the Yishuv, the plan indicates how the Zionist establishment perceived the Jews of Islamic countries according to the Orientalist perception. When the plan was accused of being too 'general', its sponsors replied that this 'generality' was appropriate to the characteristics and needs of Jewish life in Islamic countries: the low level of education of the members of the Zionist movement, the short period of time socialist-Zionist education had been available in these countries, and finally the clandestine or semi-clandestine nature of activity in some of the countries. To introduce a religious quarrel or a political quarrel or an ideological quarrel there is a crime,' argued Berl Katznelson.[29]

The Uniform Pioneer Plan set a precedent for the Zionist movement's patronizing attitude toward its adherents in the Islamic countries and later in Israel. In all the countries in which Zionism had operated until then, prospective members could choose from a range of competing Zionist youth movements, and they were aware of the variations among them from the start. They could even 'wander' from movement to movement before selecting the one that best suited them. In contrast, the Uniform Pioneer Plan offered Jewish youngsters in Islamic countries a single model of Zionism and sought to prevent not only choice but even awareness of the existence of different, competing Zionist organizations. The struggle for the souls of the prospective immigrants and their ideological and political identity had just begun.

It should kept in mind that in some Arab countries (Egypt, Libya and Tunisia) there had been vibrant Zionist activity for some time already, and the labour movement was not always dominant. In Tunisia, for example, the main Zionist player on the Jewish street was the Revisionist movement, and in Egypt several Zionist movements were active, including Hashomer Hatza'ir. So long as the Islamic countries were a remote, marginal district of Zionist activity, no one in the Zionist leadership cast doubt on the intellectual capacity of Mizrahi youngsters to choose among the movements, and it was never argued that the multiplicity of political hues could be detrimental to them. The Uniform Pioneer Plan, in contrast, was part of the intra-Zionist political struggle between Mapai and the Zionist movements and parties for hegemony in Yishuv society as it stood at the time and as it would become as a result of additional Jewish immigration. Mapai

sought to shape the ideological and political identity of the immigrants even before they arrived, thereby not only preserving its power but increasing it.

Nevertheless, the justifications given for the Uniform Pioneer Plan were based not on the conflicting interests of Zionist movements and parties, but on the standard stereotypes regarding people from Islamic countries: they were poorly educated, were deficient in their ability to make choices and judgments and needed the central Zionist institutions to decide for them. It should be noted that during the political debate over the Uniform Pioneer Plan, passions flared over the division of labour among the parties, but there was no discussion whatsoever about the 'traits' of the Mizrahim. These were perceived as axiomatic and consequently became axioms.

This perception was also manifested in the immigrant-absorption plans drawn up by the Planning Committee. The committee prepared separate plans for the absorption of immigrants from Europe and from Islamic countries; these plans had little in common. For the Europeans, transit camps were to be established in the coastal plain, from Haifa to Gaza, where they would stay for three months. The immigrants from Islamic countries were to be placed in transit camps in the Negev, where they would stay for a year or two to be trained under the guidance of old-timers; they were then expected to settle in the Negev. After the transitional stage, the immigrants were supposed to be employed in the various sectors of the economy in proportion to the economic division within the Yishuv; this would mean that 20 per cent of immigrants were to work in agriculture.[30] The Mizrahim, however, were designated for agriculture, and they were assigned the pioneering job of settling the southern periphery.[31]

Of course, the immigrant-absorption plan had little real operative significance. Without a doubt, however, it serves as an indication of the role designated for the Mizrahim in Israeli society: they were expected to be like the Yemenites—manual labourers who were used to a hot climate and hard work and who would be satisfied with very little. It should be kept in mind that the members of the Planning Committee were all Ashkenazim; their knowledge of the Mizrahim was based on the stereotypes prominent in the Yishuv, and they themselves were not free of the orientalist perception that prevailed in European cultures. Even if they had no explicit intention to exploit the Mizrahim 'as a cheap, mobile, and easily maneuverable labour force', as the cultural scholar, Ella Shohat argues,[32] the effects of the policy that they proposed were likely to produce a socioeconomic dichotomy on ethnic grounds.

These perceptions also influenced activity in the Islamic countries. The new priorities set in the One Million Plan were supposed to be manifested in the allocation of financial and human resources, that is, larger budgets for Zionist activity and an increase in the number of emissaries. A comparison of Zionist activity during World War II and in the post-war years, overall and proportionally, indicates that there was no significant change in the allocation of resources; on the contrary, the bulk of Zionist activity was in Europe. Hundreds of emissaries were sent there to organize the beriha (transport of Jewish refugees from eastern to southern and central Europe) and clandestine immigration to Palestine and to establish a Jewish defence organization. Huge budgets in Zionist terms were allocated to this activity, some by the Histadrut and the Jewish Agency but most by the Joint Distribution Committee. The activity in Jewish communities in Islamic countries, which had received a boost during the war, lost its urgency and attraction. The threat to the Jews, which, as stated, had been brought up repeatedly by the Yishuv

leadership, was no longer perceived as immediate, even though the dispute over Palestine was escalating, warnings by emissaries in Arab countries were becoming more serious, and the underground or semi-underground activity now entailed greater risk, extreme tension and exhausting work on a daily basis. The number of activists in these countries was minuscule in comparison to their counterparts in Europe. There were not even enough of them to maintain what had already been established.

CONCLUSION

As we have seen, the inclusion of the Jews of Islamic countries in the One Million Plan was the start of a reversal in immigration policy and in the overall attitude of the Zionist leadership toward these Jews. The reversal was manifested both in the conceptual switch from an ideal of selective immigration to the reality of bringing masses of people to Palestine, whoever they might be, and bringing over a population group with a culture that was perceived as inferior. Although Jews from Islamic countries had moved to Palestine before World War II, some of them with immigration certificates, due to their small number they did not pose a threat to the dominant Yishuv culture. In contrast, the One Million Plan augured a demographic reversal with ramifications for all areas of life, including a change in the Ashkenazic-Mizrahi demographic balance in the country

The reversal itself, however, does not answer the question of whether the Zionist leadership intended to perpetuate a low status for the Mizrahim in Jewish society and to bring them over in order to exploit them as a cheap source of labour, turning them into hewers of wood and drawers of water for the Ashkenazic old-timers. The discussions by the Jewish Agency Executive indicate that on the level of ideology and principle the Yishuv leadership intended the Mizrahim to be fully integrated citizens with equal rights and obligations—fully-fledged members of Yishuv society in all respects. The motivation for bringing them over was demographic and national, not economic or class-based.

Ben-Gurion's attitude is particularly interesting. He played a central role in drawing up the Zionist immigration policy. It was Ben-Gurion who devised the One Million Plan, who persuaded his colleagues in the Zionist leadership to include the Jews of Islamic countries in it, and who fought for its adoption by the Jewish Agency. With this his part ended: he did not exhibit any involvement in the operative realm of absorption planning and, although he was aware of the differential absorption plans for immigrants based on country and culture of origin, he did not intervene in the drafting of the plans. It is hard to say whether he was aware of the socio-economic significance of this policy

Particularly problematic were the tactics employed by the Zionist movement in presenting its new immigration policy As we have seen, this policy was the outcome of the needs of Zionism and of the constraints with which Zionism had to contend. On the declarative level, however, the Zionist leadership spoke of the needs of the Jews of Islamic countries—the danger that threatened them and the national obligation to save them from expected slaughter or from economic, social, and cultural 'degeneration'. These Jews were portrayed on the one hand as being weak and unaware of the severity of their situation, and it was believed that only Zionism could save them; but on other hand they were portrayed as ignoramuses with an inferior culture who needed direction, assistance and a guiding hand.

NOTES

1. Minutes of Mapai central committee meeting, 2 July 1943, Labor Party Archives, Beit Berl.
2. See Hayyim Cohen, *Ha-yehudim be-artzot ha-mizrah ha-tikhon* [The Jews in the Middle Eastern Countries] (Tel Aviv: Ben Zvi Institute, 1972).
3. On the policy of distributing certificates to Islamic countries in the 1930s, see Aviva Halamish, *Mediniut ha-aliya vehaklita shel ha-histadrut ha-zionit 1931–1937* [Immigration and Absorption Policy of the Zionist Organisation 1931–1937] (Ph.D. diss., Tel Aviv University, 1995), pp. 261–6.
4. Yaron Tsur, *Ha-beaya ha-adatit* [The Ethnic Problem], in Z.Zameret and H.Yablonka (eds), *The Second Decade* (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi, 2001) (Hebrew); Yaron Tsur, 'Carnival Fears: Moroccan Immigrants and the Ethnic Problem in the Young State of Israel', *Journal of Israeli History* 18, no. 1 (spring 1997), pp. 74–6.
5. This is how the term *levantini* is defined in Avraham Even-Shoshan, *The New Dictionary* (Jerusalem: Kirat Sefer, 1990), (Hebrew).
6. Oz Almog, *Hazabar: dyokan* [The Sabra: A Profile] (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1997), p. 137.
7. Binyamin Gil and Moshe Sicron, *Rishum Ha-toshvim*, Population Record (Heshvan 6, 5709), part 2 (Jerusalem: Central Bureau of Statistics, 1948), pp. 20–3.
8. Avraham Ben-Yaakov, *Kehilot yehude kurdistan* [The Jewish Communities of Kurdistan] (Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 1960/61), p. 24.
9. Shalom Razabi, 'Diaspora in the Land of Israel: Immigration from Yemen in the Historiography of the Yishuv and Zionism' *[Galut be-eretz yisrael: ha-aliya me-tyman ba-historiografya shel ha-yishuv ve-haziyonut], Zmanim* 63 (1998), pp. 61–5 (Hebrew).
10. On Ben-Gurion's reaction, see ibid., pp. 66–8.
11. Yoav Gelber, *Nos'ei Ha-degel* [Bearers of the Flag] (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi, 1983), pp. 3–16.
12. Minutes of Mapai central committee meeting, 12 July 1943, Labor Party Archives.
13. Ibid.
14. David Ben-Gurion, *Bama'arakha* [In the War], vol. 2 (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1957), p. 234.
15. Minutes of a meeting of the Jewish Agency Executive, 24 June 1944, Central Zionist Archives (hereinafter CZA).
16. Minutes of a meeting of the Jewish Agency Executive, 28 September 1944, CZA.
17. Dvora Hacohen, *Tochnit hamillion* [The One Million Plan] (Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defense Publishing House, 1994), p. 103.
18. Italics mine.
19. Hacohen, *The One Million Plan*, pp. 121, 209–12.
20. Ben-Gurion's diary, 30 July 1945, Ben-Gurion Archives, Midreshet Sede Boker.
21. Minutes of the Jewish Agency Executive, 24 June 1944, CZA.
22. Minutes of a meeting of the Histradrut executive committee, 29–30 December 1943, Labor Party Archives.
23. Minutes of Mapai central committee meeting, 12 July 1943, Labor Party Archives.
24. Ben-Gurion, *Bama'arakha*, p. 234.
25. Quoted in Hacohen, *The One Million Plan*, p. 212.
26. Minutes of Jewish Agency Executive meeting, 24 June 1944.
27. Dalia Ofer, 'Ha-aliya, ha-gola ve-hayshuv' ['Immigration, Diaspora, and Yishuv'] *Cathedra* 43 (1987), p. 70 (Hebrew).
28. Ibid., 18 June l945, p. 92.
29. Berl Katznelson, *Ktavim* [Writings], vol. 12 (Tel Aviv: Mapai, 1949/50), pp. 331–2.
30. Hacohen, *The One Million Plan*, p. 136.
31. Ibid., pp. 125–8.
32. Ella Shohat, 'Mizrahim in Israel: Zionism as Seen by its Jewish Victims', in Inbal Perlson (ed.), *Hamahapecha hamizrachit* [The Mizrahi Revolution] (Jerusalem: Center for Alternative Information, 1999), pp. 32, 37.

3
National Encounter and Culture Clash: The Emissaries and the Jews of Iraq

THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE ENCOUNTER BETWEEN THE EMISSARIES AND IRAQI JEWRY

The Jews of Iraq were quite familiar with the concept of emissaries from Palestine. For generations, rabbinical emissaries from Palestine had been visiting the Jews of Babylonia and Kurdistan to collect funds for the holy cities and the institutions of the Old Yishuv. The emissaries were shown great respect. To Diaspora Jewry, the rabbinical emissaries—generally eloquent, persuasive, impressive-looking Torah sages—represented the Holy Land, and they were received with awe and adulation. They derived their authority and stature not from their extensive knowledge of the Torah or their great wisdom, and not only from their personalities, but primarily from the rabbis who had sent them and the authority of the Land of Israel. They could demand assistance for Palestine, enact regulations, decide disputes and issue halakhic rulings on controversial subjects.[1] The attitude toward them emanated from the yearning for redemption and messianic expectations.

The main difference between the rabbinical emissaries and the Yishuv emissaries had to do with their aims and their methods. The Yishuv emissaries worked in Iraq for relatively long periods of time, usually a year or two, and unlike the rabbinical emissaries they came not to collect funds but to work with the Jews themselves—to turn them into Zionists and to encourage them to move to Palestine. The funding for the activity came mainly from Palestine.

On the personal level, too, the new emissaries differed from traditional rabbinical emissaries: not only did they lack the special garb, including an ornate turban, but they wore European suits and were bareheaded and clean shaven. They were not religious, and most lacked even minimal knowledge of religious laws and tradition. Nevertheless, the Mossad emissaries enjoyed the same mystical adulation as the rabbinical emissaries did. Although Iraqi Jewry in the 1940s included an educated class imbued with modern western influence, Jewish religion and tradition had a strong hold on most of the population, especially the middle and lower classes, inhabitants of rural areas and residents of small towns throughout Iraq, but particularly in the Kurdish north. The Jews who came into contact with the emissaries admired their courage, their zeal, their devotion, their simplicity and their modest, ascetic way of life, as well as the fact that they had left behind homes, families and comfortable lives to live in hiding in a faraway strange land, in an unfamiliar society and culture, and in a harsh climate. The emissaries symbolized different things to different segments of the Jewish community. Because they were sent by the Zionist establishment, they represented the Jewish Agency, which was perceived as having international political power and being the leader of the entire Jewish world. The Iraqi Jewish leadership was careful to avoid confrontations with them. The community leaders monitored the Zionist activity, maintained indirect ties with the

emissaries and in some cases even sent messages to the Jewish Agency through them, but they never took any action against them.

To the Kurdish Jews in northern Iraq, the concept of the rabbinical emissaries from the Holy Land was embodied in the Yishuv emissaries. The Jews in this region were more religious and conservative than those in the cities of central Iraq, and they had been less exposed to modern influences. Yearnings for redemption and messianic expectations were especially strong here, and the Yishuv emissaries—who visited the area frequently beginning in 1946—were treated with messianic adulation.[2]

To urban Jewish teenagers from the middle and lower classes—students in modern schools—the emissaries had a dual symbolism: they had come from Palestine and bore the banner of Jewish nationalism, but they also represented the highly developed, admired western culture. In this context, it is important to note that not all the emissaries were of European extraction: Ezra Kadoorie and Shlomo Hillel had emigrated from Iraq as children, and Yerahmiel Asa (Asailov) was a native of Bukhara. But their Palestinian background gave them a western aura. The emissaries thus represented the Jewish youngsters' dual cultural world on the border between old and new, between religion and secularism, between tradition and modernity, between East and West. Moreover, they gave these youngsters a new ideology and new social and cultural values and filled the vacuum created in the 1940s by the dilemma of Iraqi patriotism and growing antisemitic nationalism. They gave the Jewish youngsters a challenge.

In their everyday behaviour the emissaries served as personal role models. Their ideological steadfastness, their national pride and their western culture combined to evoke blind adulation and absolute obedience in the members of the Zionist circle. However, blind adulation led to high expectations and a consequent inability to accept human weaknesses, errors, failures and limitations. The emissaries were regarded as omniscient and omnipotent, and when they did not live up to expectations, the results were bitter complaints and anger.[3]

PORTRAIT OF THE EMISSARIES

The emissaries from Palestine were young, mostly in their twenties with a minority in their early thirties. Only two of them—Enzo Sereni and Meir Shilon—were in their late thirties. In Palestine, the emissaries had held various positions in youth movements, rural settlements, or the Haganah; these positions entailed specific, and usually limited, powers and responsibilities. Sereni, one of the founders of Givat Brenner, was active in the Histadrut (General Federation of Jewish Labour) and Mapai and was the only emissary who was a well-known public figure. When they arrived in Iraq, the emissaries took on jobs with a much broader purview of activity, responsibility and authority than they had had before. Few emissaries operated in Iraq at any one time: usually one headed Hehalutz, which had hundreds of members in dozens of branches throughout Iraq; one was in charge of organizing clandestine aliyah; and one was in charge of a countrywide Jewish defence organization, which towards the end of the period had a few hundred active members and many weapons caches. It was a heavy burden, and it involved extreme tension and considerable emotional fatigue. They were motivated by a sense of national mission and saw themselves as a vanguard fulfilling Zionist objectives, which

were perceived as the only way to rescue these Jews: protecting them, winning them over to Zionism and bringing them to Palestine. The emissaries were prepared to pay a high personal price to achieve these Jewish and Zionist objectives. However, their nationalist worldview also included orientalist values taken from the European colonialist heritage.

As a result, the emissaries saw themselves as fighters on behalf of lofty ideological and cultural values. They regarded themselves as sober, experienced men coming to shake a complacent community from its slumber and blindness and rescue it before it was too late. Although the needs of Palestine were given priority over the needs of the local Jewish community, the emissaries saw no contradiction in this; rather, they viewed the different needs as two sides of the same coin. Moreover, because their aim was to organize immigration by young people to communal rural settlements, they showed special interest in matters that they considered important for Zionist activity and socialist education. Accordingly, they evaluated every aspect of Iraqi Jewish society in light of its compatibility with the needs of Palestine.

Three periods can be discerned in the history of the emissaries to Iraq. The first, 1942 to 1943, was a time of laying foundations. The first three emissaries—Enzo Sereni, Shemariah Guttman and Ezra Kadoorie—devoted their first year in Iraq to settling into the community, studying the local society and figuring out methods of action. It was a year of doubts and vacillations, a year in which they described and criticized Jewish society extensively. The second period, 1943 to 1948, was a time of building and consolidation. Though still surprised by what they found in Iraq, the emissaries were better prepared for what to expect and had been briefed by their predecessors. The successes in Zionist education added another dimension to the ideological attitude toward Iraqi Jewry The emissaries during this period included Aryeh Eshel (Shill), a former member of the Jewish auxiliary police in Palestine and agent of the Haganah intelligence service; Yehoshua Givoni, a former Hehalutz activist in Poland and a member of Kibbutz Allonim; Yehoshua Baharav (Rabinowitz) of Ginnosar and his brother Yehonatan of Sedot Yam; Shlomo Hillel, a native of Iraq who had moved to Palestine as a child and was a member of Kevutzat Hatzofim Aleph; and Yerahmiel Asa (Asailov), a Bukharan-born member of Kibbutz Hulata. The third period, 1949 to 1951, was different. By then the emissaries to Iraq were all natives of Iraq and Zionist movement alumni who had moved to Palestine as adults: David Ben-Meir; Rafael Zurani, one of the founders of Kibbutz Be'eri and its 'mukhtar'; Mordechai Ben-Porat, an IDF captain; and Yoav Goral, another of the founders of Be'eri.

The time period in which each emissary operated, his ethnic origin, and his background all affected his perspective on Iraqi Jewish society But other factors also affected an emissary's attitude toward the community, such as his knowledge about Arab society and his sources of information, for example, contact with Arabs in Palestine during his service in the Haganah or Palmah or acquaintance with oriental Jews in Palestine. Another factor was the emissary's opportunity to become familiar directly with Arab society in Iraq. Most of the emissaries lived in the homes of Jews, had contact only with Zionists and could not wander freely through the streets of Baghdad and speak with people. Even those who looked like Arabs spoke the Palestinian dialect of Arabic, which was liable to arouse suspicion and give them away. The exceptions were the 'legal' emissaries who operated in Baghdad as employees of Solel Boneh (Sereni, Eshel and Shilon) and had ties with people outside the Jewish community, too.

With all these factors in mind, let us look at the emissaries' comments about Iraqi Jewry and distinguish between the socialist-Zionist and cultural motif and the personal and human factor. In the first category are descriptions, explanations and opinions that primarily illustrate the emissaries' cultural worldview and ideology; the second category includes comments made in connection with problems and failures, in light of the personality traits of the individual emissaries and the circumstances of their mission. Because the time when each emissary arrived in Iraq was so important in shaping his perception of these Jews, we distinguish, for each of the two categories, between the initial period of activity and the later periods.

THE IDEOLOGICAL-CULTURAL DIMENSION

For most of the emissaries, including those of eastern origin, the encounter with Jewish society and culture in Iraq was an encounter with a foreign, bizarre world. Because the way of life and value system were so different from their own, they developed a comprehensive, all-inclusive image of Iraqi Jewry that should be regarded not as reality but as the way reality was reflected in the eyes of the emissaries from Palestine.

Enzo Sereni in particular observed the cultural, social and national condition of the Jewish community. He mentioned the subject repeatedly in memos to the Jewish Agency and the Mossad, in reports to the Mossad and in lectures to the executive bodies of the national institutions when he visited Palestine. According to Sereni, the Iraqi Jews were becoming almost completely assimilated among their Arab neighbours in all ways: language, culture, way of life, and economic activity. The Jews resembled the Arab 'effendi' (middle-class city dweller) in all respects.[4] However, he claimed, 'it is worth noting the complete disintegration of Jewish public life. Charitable institutions do not exist. Religion in the serious sense of the word does not exist. There is a petrified tradition.'[5] The young people were at their wits' end and were gripped by 'emotional disintegration.'[6] With the exception of a small class of educated people who were open to certain western influences, the Jews were cut off from reality. This is how Sereni described the world of the traditional, non-westernized population:

> These are Jews who still live according to tradition, although they are not meticulous about observing the commandments and know neither the reasons for the commandments nor a chapter of the Torah; people whose Jewish 'feeling' is still pristine but is frequently mixed with all sorts of superstitions and all sorts of 'preconceived notions'. …This world is being destroyed from within. It is rotten inside, and it is liable to crumble quickly if one merely touches it… Here, as in other Exile lands, we are witnessing the final days of the old Jewish world… Their homes are *disintegrating* under the pressure of outside conditions and, with the disintegration of family life, this world is coming to an end.[7]

Sereni's description reflects the problems that plagued the three emissaries in their first year in Iraq. As a foreigner in Arab society and culture, Sereni tried to find his way through the unfamiliar labyrinth with the help of concepts drawn from his own world and

comparisons with the European societies that were familiar to him. This is reflected in Sereni's claim of cultural and linguistic assimilation. Although most Iraqi Jews in the 1940s knew the Arabic dialect spoken by the Muslims and many of them were also proficient in literary Arabic, among themselves they spoke a Jewish-Arabic dialect containing many Hebrew words and written in Hebrew script. Sereni himself noted that there was no problem of Jewish identity in Iraq and that, despite the 'assimilation', the Jew 'is set apart in his consciousness, and inside he knows he is different'.[8] Sereni also criticized the Iraqi Jews' attitude toward religion, which he considered an indication of the 'petrification' of the community: there was no religious atmosphere, no profound religious feeling, and whatever religious observance existed was based on habit and tradition and not necessarily on faith. According to him, the young people were not rebelling against their religion; they were apathetic to it. They refrained from attending synagogue services not as a form of rebellion, as had occurred in Europe, but out of apathy. If Jews closed their shops on the Sabbath, he said, they did so out of habit or lack of choice.[9] But Sereni's conclusions were completely unfounded. Jewish religious developments in Iraq were not the same as in Europe. Modernization and westernization in Iraq did not lead to assimilation and apostasy, as they did in Europe. When some people began to identify with the Iraqi people and Arab culture, the trend was limited to a small elite of intellectuals—writers, poets and journalists—and even they did not opt out of the Jewish people. Moreover, so long as the changes occurred at the initiative of the community leaders and under their supervision, they did not threaten the foundations of Jewish society, and so long as the Iraqi Jews felt secure in their religion and culture, they demonstrated a forgiving attitude toward the decline in religious observance by the young generation. Consequently, no Orthodoxy developed in Iraq, and the religious establishment did not cut itself off from the rest of the Jewish community or declare war on western secular influences, as in eastern Europe.

The emissaries were also highly critical of the value system, way of life and leisure culture of Jewish society, and their criticism was imbued with ideological and cultural prejudice. According to Sereni: 'Jewish society in the city is entirely a society of men. The clubs are full only of men. They play cards, drink arak [an alcoholic beverage]. Moral turpitude is widespread among the young people.'[10] Shemariah Guttman, too, criticized their way of life:

> All of life is in the café. *There is no family culture.* Men are not with their wives and children; instead they sit in the café, where they play backgammon or cards for hours upon hours… In every corner is a brothel and arak… There are clubs for the rich, where wealthy families go. This is the center of matchmaking and gossip, but if they want to have a good time, they go to a café… *The theater has no culture.* Talents are developed according to the needs of the audience … This culture is dominated by Jews; it is total assimilation in the east.[11]

Ezra Kadoorie also lambasted this way of life, the tendency of the wealthy to sequester themselves in their clubs, and the standard leisure habits of all the social classes:

> Gossip and pettiness as a result of empty lives with no content. Conversations…about this one's life and that one's clothing, about fashions, old and new, about this wedding and what the bride looked like…and all sorts of earthshaking questions and matters.[12]

This way of life, which the emissaries considered materialistic, as well as the young people's pursuit of economic success, upward social mobility and their focus on a career, seemed to Kadoorie to be negative and worrisome. In order to understand the Iraqi Jews, Kadoorie, himself a native of Iraq, compared them with European Jewry. Despite never having been in Europe and knowing relatively little about its culture, he explained that the European Jews had lived a life rich in contrasts: They had witnessed the turbulence of revolutions and national liberations and had been influenced by acts of self-sacrifice. They had been refined by the arts and had experienced riots and trauma. This kind of life, Kadoorie believed, had led European Jews to Zionism. Things were different in Baghdad:

> Here in this country a typical Diaspora Jewry developed, characterized by fear, betrayal, turning people in to the authorities, and not keeping secrets… And in addition to all these is a weakening of their desire for independent life and acceptance of a life of slavery and disgrace.[13]

Based on these analyses of Jewish society, the first emissaries concluded that a different type of Jew had evolved in Islamic countries: one lacking in national pride, incapable of joining together to collaborate, emotional and irrational, a cowardly informer, hypocritical and two-faced. Sereni described it as follows:

> This material is not the material of Europe; rather, it is material that is quick to become impassioned but also quick to despair… The opportunity to inform and blab is too much [even] for the best people. Inability to keep a secret, inability to keep one's word… There is deep water and that water isn't bad…but there is foam on the surface of the water and it is bad; it is the Levantine-Arab kind …Levantine-style assimilation into a culture that either does not yet exist or is on a low level. This has a very bad influence on the people's character. They can be made into 'human beings,' but we won't be able to do it without help from the people in Palestine…[14]

Guttman added: The Iraqi imagination and enthusiasm interfere with all action. When an Iraqi says "yes, yes", say "no, no".'[15]

Interestingly, this criticism was not directed at traditional society but at those segments of society that had been exposed to western culture to some degree and had adopted some of its values and customs. The 'assimilation', in the emissaries' opinion, had produced a mixed, 'Levantine' culture, a transitional culture that they viewed as a superficial, shallow, phony imitation of European culture.

The emissaries who came after the first three continued to criticize Jewish society in Baghdad, based on the same cultural and Zionist attitude. The conclusions were twofold: despair over the older generation and faith in the ability of the young people if they

received the proper education. In a letter to friends back on the kibbutz, the Hehalutz emissary Yehoshua Givoni described the local Jews:

> Such degeneration of the Israelite race, such groveling, sycophantic assimilation, such lowliness, and such public filth and even plain, actual filth… I doubt there is any hope for the desert generation, but it would be a shame to lose the children and teenagers, and there are good youngsters…[16]

Aryeh Abramovsky, an aliyah emissary who worked with Givoni, had similar comments. He complained especially about the lack of solidarity among the Jews and their inability to work together:

> Mutual suspicion due to constant fear, mainly of their fellow Jews, assimilation, and *moshkism*[17] prevents any independent Jewish public activity and any organizing. Bribery at every step,…informing,…dreadful greed, a desire to trip each other up, lies about Palestine and untrue stories about evil Ashkenazim, without any faith in anything, not in religion or in any other idea…only in the power of money.[18]

Two of the emissaries even complained about opposite traits, both of which they considered negative. Aryeh Eshel claimed that the 'main fault among the youth is unlimited, uncalculated risk-taking',[19] whereas the aliyah emissary Yehoshua Baharav complained about their cowardliness: 'There are cowardly Jewish chatterboxes and there are despicable Jews.'[20] Baharav added that 'the local Jews, despite all their cowardliness, know no caution and stop me in the street. I don't know what to do.'[21] Despite their complaints, the emissaries were confident that the Iraqi Jews would not inform on the people in the Haganah.[22] In this context, it is interesting that Aryeh Eshel attributed therapeutic and rehabilitative abilities to the Haganah:

> More than many other things, the education in the d[efence] o[rganization] is likely to change the Levantine character of the local Jewish youth, to develop courage and sincerity in them… The work with weapons plants faith in their own strength in the hearts of the young men and women. It provides a highly important counterweight to the Diaspora-Jewish inferiority complex that is so hard to uproot.[23]

Shaul Avigur (Meirov) made some particularly caustic comments. Avigur, the head of the Mossad, initiator of the missions to Iraq and patron of the project throughout its existence, made the remarks in the summer of 1945 in a conversation with Yisrael Hertz of Hashomer Hatza'ir, who had gone to Iraq without authorization from the Mossad, refused to recognize the authority of the Uniform Pioneer Plan and been forced to return to Palestine. Hertz's mission provoked a furore among the emissaries in Baghdad and caused tension and bitter conflict between the Basra branch, where Hertz worked, and the Baghdad branch, whose members helped the emissaries in their struggle against him. According to long, detailed minutes recorded by Hertz at the end of the conversation,

Avigur described Iraqi Jewry as 'the cowardly eastern Jews who say one thing and mean another… They love to philosophize.' Avigur explained the need to bring Hertz back to Palestine in terms of the character of the locals and its potential ramifications:

> You and I, you and people from Palestine, can have an argument that is more intense or less intense. These orientals will not be quiet. A quarrel will start there. After all, their whole lives are a constant quarrel. In the family, from the outside. And now they'll be given an excellent opportunity for a quarrel—a political quarrel—and it will start with words, will go on to knives, and will reach the police…[24]

It should be noted that Hertz's return to Palestine had nothing to do with these or any other traits of the Iraqi Jews. It was part of Mapai's struggle to ensure the hegemony of Hehalutz in the Diaspora. Avigur's remarks reflect Yishuv arrogance and show that the emissaries were not the only ones with a negative image of the Jews of Iraq; those who sent them, even the patrons of Iraqi Jewry, shared the orientalist paradigm. In this case, the paradigm made it easier to blame one of the worst disputes in the history of Zionism in Iraq on the local Jews than on the true motives.

Attempts to analyse the structure and culture of Jewish society were particularly characteristic of the Mossad's first years in Iraq. They attest to the shock of the encounter between the Eurocentric Zionists and Arab society and culture in Iraq. The former derived their attitude towards Iraqi Jewish society from cultural stereotypes as well as from the socialist Zionist ideology. The emissaries' descriptions did, of course, have some basis in fact, but they ignored the historical developments that had produced the systems and norms of Iraqi Jewish society, positive aspects, and examples that contradicted the image that they created. These attitudes, hurtful remarks and insulting explanations stemmed less from the Iraqi reality than from the way this reality was interpreted by people who had been brought up in a national movement that rejected and looked down on its Jewish origins. In this context, the remarks about the humiliation involved in Jewish-Muslim relations, the social and religious petrification, and so on, could have been made about any other Jewish community in Islamic countries, in Europe, or anywhere else.

One of the emissaries' main criticisms had to do with 'labour', that is, a return to productive, manual labour, and especially farming, as a condition for and means of normalizing Jewish society. The ideological aspects of this goal combined with economic and national aspects derived from the needs of the national home and political aspects relating to building a support base for the labour parties in Palestine. The emissaries perceived the matter as fundamental. As they saw it, immigrants who moved to the cities were not the kind that Palestine needed. But conditions in Iraq encouraged people to become middlemen, clerks, and civil servants and minimized the value of 'productive' occupations. 'Labourers' were identified with *fellahin*—the ignorant, poor people from the inferior, oppressed social class at the bottom of the socio-economic ladder of the Arab world. 'Physical labour', wrote Sereni, 'has no charm and attraction for young Iraqis. Any "respectable" man avoids the easiest work as if it were something lowly "Workers", "labourers", are "coolies", people on the lowest level.'[25] Kadoorie tried to analyse how this outlook had developed.

> 'Career' is the entire world of the Iraqi young men and teenagers in all classes. It is their entire focus and all they think about. It is their entire aim in life, the linchpin rooted in their souls, the educational rod with which every young person is raised. The school, the home, the street, the market, the family, everything that surrounds the young man is harnessed to this goal.[26]

The way of life was further evidence of the social ideals:

> There is hardly any home without a servant. One doesn't go to get a drink of water without calling for a servant and asking for water. There are Jewish servants from Kurdistan in the homes of the Jews. It is inconceivable for a Baghdadi Jew to do physical labour.[27]

Another subject that evoked criticism of both the Diaspora and eastern culture was the status of women in Iraq (see chapter 5). Sereni repeatedly reported on unacceptable marriage customs and the harm they caused. It should be kept in mind that the struggle to integrate girls in Hehalutz was basic to the movement. The emissaries rejected the idea of the patriarchal family and the local custom that made girls totally dependent on their fathers, brothers and husbands. After marrying whomever they chose, a Jewish woman in Iraq would enter a closed, monolithic system of serving her husband and raising the children—or so the system appeared to the emissaries. The emissaries wanted to break down this system:

> The rule of the family must be broken… [This is] one of the educational tasks that our movement must face even before there is any Zionist and Jewish activity. First of all we have to engage in human educational activity, turn them into human beings…[28]

The phrases 'human educational activity' and 'turn them into human beings' reflect a total rejection of the local culture and of the humanity of the bearers of this culture, based, of course, on a latent comparison with the 'enlightened' western culture and its bearers. But historically speaking, too, this statement is problematic. True, the status of women and girls in Iraqi Jewish society was inferior, and even the community's rabbis and leaders tried to rectify offensive, harmful customs in family life. But the emissaries ignored the atmosphere, tradition, and customs of non-Jewish Iraqi society, as well as the protection and security that the family gave young Jewish women, who were vulnerable as female members of a minority group.

Moreover, because they did not work with the upper class, the emissaries ignored the rapid liberation of women in this class. Also, they did not pay attention to the tremendous change that had occurred in the status of Jewish girls in the previous few decades: many of them—including those from the middle class—had attended high school and some even had a higher education.

The emissaries' criticism of the upper middle class, too, is a generalization that ignores certain aspects. People in this class held key positions in Iraqi economic life and important administrative positions, including membership of parliament. They were open

to western culture and had a favourable attitude toward the acquisition of information and education. Enrolment by young Iraqi Jews in institutions of higher education in Iraq and abroad increased substantially in the 1930s and 1940s.

Another lens through which to evaluate Baghdadi Jewish society is the writings of Abraham el-Kabir, director-general of the Finance Ministry and one of the prominent leaders of the community. In his memoirs, written in the 1960s after he left Iraq for London, el-Kabir describes the changes that took place in the social and cultural life of the community:

> The progress covered many fields: housing, family life, social relations and most of all the emancipation of the women. In the latter field progress was prodigious. The veil, the abbayah, and the izar were discarded, faces were no longer covered and were not unpleasant to see. The turbaned wrapping of the head was abandoned, the long tresses with their hanging ornaments were cut and the hair was dressed at one of the numerous dressing saloons in most up-to-date style. Home made garments were replaced by ready made dresses from Orosdi-Back [a large department store in Baghdad] or specially tailored in one of the fashionable dress makers in the town. Women ceased to confine themselves to housewifery only; they now went to the shops, to the club, or to visit a friend with whom they gossiped on all sort of subjects, played rummy or poker often at high stakes…
>
> Men were not left behind in this race of modernization… Several social clubs were opened, the first was inaugurated in 1926 …People met in these clubs accompanied by their wives and children, which gave the club the character of a family centre. Games were played, social events were held including wedding ceremonies and on occasions, lectures and musical parties…
>
> This trend of modernization was accompanied by some relaxation in religious practices and traditional customs.[29]

The picture of the Jewish high society, as described by el-Kabir, is very similar to the emissaries' description; but the 'Levantine' phenomena that the emissaries considered negative were viewed by el-Kabir as another step forward, based on a comparison of the present with the past and an appreciation of the objective difficulties. Indeed, el-Kabir saw nothing wrong with emulation of the European way of life, even if it was superficial and merely external. The emissaries, in contrast, saw the half-empty glass due to their cultural, national and socialist value system. They contrasted the 'negative' phenomena with the pioneering-Zionist values of aliyah and settlement of Palestine. We can get a clear picture of the essence of these values from Yehoshua Givoni's remarks to the settlement group of immigrants from the Iraqi Zionist movement on Kibbutz Be'eri in 1947:

> I remember you from the Diaspora, the *scope of your world* there, the *ghetto alleys*, the *atmosphere of criticism and idleness and humiliation*— and I see you here, in Nahbir [Be'eri] in the Negev, and I hear you talking

> about settlement and the conquest of [physical] labour… I hear the fresh expression and the fervor of faith.[30]

It should be remembered that in Iraq these young people had been high-school pupils, many of them living in the stone houses in or near the Jewish quarter, and just before leaving for Palestine they had been busy taking their matriculation exams. Only profound faith in the pioneering-Zionist ideology can explain Givoni's interpretation.

THE PERSONAL AND HUMAN DIMENSION

The first emissaries passed on their perceptions of Jewish society to their successors. When Aryeh Eshel arrived in Iraq in October 1943, he had already been briefed on what to expect: back in Palestine Sereni had explained to him that the Iraqi Jews were not willing to donate money and that there was no chance of getting anything out of them.[31] As soon as he arrived, he reported that two soldiers from Palestine, who had been Sereni's assistants, were 'trying to blacken the place and its inhabitants to me and claim that Ehud [Sereni] must be my sworn enemy or he wouldn't have advised me to come here'.[32] After just three weeks, Eshel was already expressing strong opinions about the local Jews: The Jews here are worthless and stiff-necked, but they are Jews despite it all and ways can be found to approach them.'[33] After spending another week 'studying conditions', Eshel concluded that the declared 'Zionism' of the Iraqi Jews bore no resemblance to true Zionism—while making an exception for the people in the Zionist movement. Later he made some of the most offensive comments ever written by any of the emissaries: 'All this is nothing but dreadful hypocrisy, Levantinism at its peak. The lack of character among the Jews here is frightening.' It should be noted that these remarks were simply a denunciation of the Iraqi Jews' unwillingness to adopt the values of the Zionist movement and move to Palestine. Eshel also proposed a fundamentally colonialist method of dealing with the situation:

> Our job is to develop the character traits of the local Jews, to teach them ethics, and to build on the inferiority complex that they all have vis-à-vis Europe and the European Jew (which they consider to include the Jews of Palestine) more than to teach them Zionist theory.[34]

Eshel's comments reveal impulsiveness, arrogance, and uncommon frankness, but they also reflect the views that were widespread among the emissaries in Baghdad. After leaving Iraq, Eshel again referred to the character of the Iraqi Jews. Although he left out the harsh words this time, his basic attitude remained the same: 'The question of Iraqi Jewry is a question of character education and a forge for humanity…education to create a human being.'[35] In July 1946, a week after arriving in Iraq, Shlomo Hillel sent a letter in which he made a categorical statement that shows that he, too, had imbibed the assessments that prevailed among the emissaries: 'The north of the country here is the only place where the Jews have a human face, and where there is material that is more or less suited for labour…'[36] Caustic descriptions and arrogant remarks gradually became less and less common and are rare in letters that we have from 1946 on. It seems that

after the shock of the initial encounter, there was nothing new to say about the traits of Iraqi Jewish society. The difficulties of the early years of Zionist activity in Iraq, which were marked by uncertainty and path-seeking, despair and worries, contributed somewhat to the negative interpretations, allegations, and caustic comments. Moreover, by 1944 Hehalutz was fully operational in Iraq, with a group of loyal, serious counsellors and supporters in the Jewish street. This development generally mitigated the harshness of the remarks, and they ceased completely in 1949 when the emissaries were alumni of the Iraqi Hehalutz movement. These emissaries were an organic part of Iraqi Jewish society and were quite familiar with it; and although they had rebelled against its customs and many of its values, they did not reject its existence and were not contemptuous of the quality of its people, its leadership and its institutions.

Another type of allegation or offensive comment was written in response to failures of Zionist activity, especially pertaining to aliyah. Such remarks had been made as early as September 1942, in letters by Guttman and Kadoorie, after the first failure of clandestine aliyah: 'The behavior of the folks' parents is criminal… Even superb young men have been revealed in all their cowardliness… There is nothing good to say about the Jews here.'[37] The aliyah emissary Aryeh Abramovsky claimed that the 'human material' in Iraq precluded large-scale clandestine aliyah, because the people were afraid to take risks.

> Their faith bursts as soon as they encounter the smallest stumbling blocks on the road of life. And the pioneering consciousness is not so deep and quickly dissipates. The youth are tough and the Jews are rigid… If only we had different human material in these lands, we could easily overcome all the problems of developing routes… It's hard to endanger this human material, because by endangering the person we generally jeopardize the entire action.[38]

Yehoshua Baharav, Abramovsky's replacement, also complained about the members of the movement, who were 'full of worries and unfounded fear'.[39] In July 1945, after the capture of ten would-be emigrants in Mosul and their families' enraged reaction, he wrote to the Mossad: 'Between you and us, even my assistants, who have never been known for their outstanding courage, are utterly depressed… They were simply gripped by fear… What can we do? This is the Exile—and what an Exile.'[40]

Meir Shilon's frustration over his failure to obtain contributions from the rich Baghdadi Jews is reflected in his description of them:

> The main thing is money, money, and money with fear, fear, and fear thrown in… Sometimes I have the feeling: for whom am I working here? Hearts of stone, selfishness, and greed—that is what marks the ruling class here, and woe, woe to the masses who are here tomorrow.[41]

Some of these sharp, caustic comments were unfounded defamations—expressions of fear, anger or frustration in the wake of failures and disappointments. Sometimes the emissaries were venting their emotions or looking for a scapegoat. Some of these remarks were probably meant to justify their actions to the Mossad and perhaps to themselves as well. Quite likely, in describing the difficulties, the emissaries wanted to look good to the

Mossad, and perhaps to prove to their friends on the kibbutz that their mission was not much fun. On the other hand, it should be kept in mind that most of the negative descriptions were said in closed forums or written in personal letters to the kibbutz, friends and family; even the letters to the Mossad were intended for a very small group of readers. In these forums the emissaries did not hesitate to express opinions and preconceived notions, freely and without self-criticism, that could not be expressed in public.

To sum up, the denunciations of Iraqi Jewry by the Mossad emissaries can be attributed to human factors, given the characteristics and risks of the mission and the character and personality of each emissary. But their specific choice of terms and of character traits to denounce was not coincidental. It indicates the existence of a pool of negative traits that were so thoroughly assumed by the emissaries and those who sent them that they were never subject to clarification and criticism.

The emissaries' deeply ingrained ideological values made their comments more offensive and gave them ideological justification. It should be recalled that 'negation of the Exile' was a major value in the ideology of the socialist-Zionist revival movement and characterized Zionist attitudes toward every Diaspora community. The term 'human dust' was typical of this worldview, which dismissed the significance of everyone outside the socialist-Zionist camp; in the late 1940s the term was often used in reference to European Holocaust survivors and their ability to contribute to building up the land.

The encounter between the emissaries and Iraqi Jewry was not merely an encounter between Zionism and a Diaspora Jewish community; it was also an encounter between West and East, with an added dimension of cultural arrogance. Socialist Zionism rejected the way of life of the bourgeois and petits-bourgeois Jews, and especially the occupations and ways of life of the Jews in the eastern European *shtetl*. But it did not reject Jewish culture in its entirety, and of course it did not reject the values of European culture: science, technology literature, music, art, theatre, and so on. The adoption of these values was part of the normalization of the Jewish people and the moulding of the 'new Jew'. In contrast, the Zionist rejection of Iraqi Jewish life was total, encompassing the way of life and customs, the mentality and thought patterns, the culture and art. All these values, which form the cornerstones that shape the human soul, traits, moral yardsticks, aspirations and self-esteem, were linked under the category of 'Levantine'.

This picture of Iraqi Jewry reflects only the views of the Yishuv emissaries and is a lens through which we can see their worldviews. It is important to deconstruct this image in order to understand its effects on moulding the Yishuv leaders' opinions of the Jews of Iraq and other Islamic countries. During the years of Zionist activity in Iraq, many reports from emissaries arrived in Palestine, and all the emissaries painted the same picture: a picture of an oriental Jewish community with a 'Levantine' culture and materialistic values and yardsticks. It is hard to assess the influence of these reports on the image that leaders and society in Palestine had of Iraqi Jewry, but presumably it was not negligible; the emissaries were the main pipeline from these Jews and were considered highly trustworthy sources of information. The fingerprints of the reports from Baghdad are evident in many of the references to Jews from Islamic countries in speeches and writings by Yishuv leaders. Moreover, the emissaries' interpretations were fed by ideological and cultural conceptions that had long prevailed in the Zionist movement and in Yishuv society regarding the 'Exile' in general and the Jews of Islamic countries in particular.

The compatibility of these interpretations with the prevailing conceptions helped to reinforce and consolidate the former and perhaps even added more layers to them.

The emissaries' attitude toward Iraqi Jewish society and culture was influential not only in Palestine but also among Hehalutz members in Iraq. The members uncritically internalized the values and yardsticks brought by the emissaries as indisputable truths. If they had any criticism or internal objections, they did not express them in words. The rejection of the basic local cultural values caused tension between the members and those around them—their families and Jewish and Arab society—and sometimes alienated them from each other. Consequently, many of the members developed a yearning for western culture, which was perceived as loftier—a dominant, total culture. Among those who already had such a yearning, it became stronger or was legitimized. The result was ambivalence about the local culture, manifested in a variety of ways, from criticism to alienation.[42] This adoption of the values of Yishuv society, together with self-denial and rejection of the values that had been instilled in them at home, constitutes the other side of the rejection of the culture of the Jews of Islamic countries.

NOTES

1. Avraham Ya'ari, *Sheluhei Eretz Yisrael* [Emissaries from Palestine] (Jerusalem: Rabbi Kook Institute, 1977), p. 33.
2. For example, Yerahmiel Asa surprised people in Kurdistan with his nonreligious appearance: clean shaven, bareheaded and ignorant even about the laws of synagogue prayer. The members of Hehalutz excused his appearance on the grounds that the underground conditions in which he worked compelled him to shave his beard. Conference of aliyah committees, Babylonian Jewry Heritage Center (BJHC), recordings 641–2.
3. The problem of dashed expectations came up especially when keeping promises to the local activists depended not on the emissaries themselves but on the Mossad and other people in Palestine or elsewhere.
4. Sereni, lecture to the Aliyah Bet committee, 2 July 1942, Galili files, Haganah Archives.
5. Sereni, minutes of a Histadrut executive committee meeting, 31 March 1943, p. 3, Labour Movement Archives.
6. Minutes of a Jewish Agency Executive meeting, 4 April 1943, CZA.
7. Sereni to Mossad, 22 September 1942, CZA, S25/5290.
8. Sereni, lecture to the Aliyah Bet committee, 2 July 1942; see also Eliyahu Agassi, 'Reshit ha-hilun ba-qehila ha-yehudit be-Baghdad ve-ha-ma'amatzim ligdor ba'ado' [The beginning of secularization in the Baghdad Jewish Community and the efforts to halt it], in Menahem Zahari et al., (eds), *Hagut ivrit be-artzot ha-islam* [Hebrew Thought in Islamic Countries] (Jerusalem: Brit Ivrit Olamit, 1981).
9. Sereni, lecture to the Aliyah Bet committee, 2 July 1942, p. 4, Haganah Archives. Similar conclusions regarding the assimilation of Iraqi Jewry appear in Guttman, 'Excerpts from Remarks about the Jews in Iraq', 4 February 1943, Hakibbutz Hameuhad Archives, division 2 foreign, container 17, file 87; and in Ezra Kadoorie, 'From Ish Maoz', 29 October 1942, Hakibbutz Hameuhad Archives, division 2 foreign, container 17, file 87.
10. 'On the Iraqi Exile', by H.E.S. (probably Sereni), 30 April 1943, in *Tzeror mikhtavim* 7, p. 248.
11. Guttman, 'Excerpts'.
12. Kadoorie, 'From Ish Maoz'.
13. Ibid.
14. Sereni, lecture to the Aliyah Bet committee, 2 July 1942.
15. Guttman, 'Excerpts'.

16. Y[ehoshua] All[onim] to Friends, 25 November 1944, Archives of the Hehalutz Movement in Iraq, BJHC.
17. Bibi explains the word *moshkism* as being derived from *mesheq* ('property' or 'economy') and meaning 'love of private enterprise'. Alternatively, it may come from *'Mishke'*, a derogatory term for a Jew who is fearful of the Polish landowner. M.Bibi, *Ha-mahteret hatziyyonit-halutzit be-Iraq* [The Underground Pioneer Zionist Movement in Iraq] (Jerusalem: Hakibbutz Hameuhad, 1988), p. 283.
18. Yehiel to H.Y. [Mossad], 29 May 1944, Archives of the Hehalutz Movement in Iraq, BJHC.
19. Minutes of a meeting of the emissaries from eastern lands, 26 January 1944, Haganah Archives, 14/20.
20. Bin-Nun to Ben-Yehuda [Yehoshua Baharav to Avigur], 7 September 1945, Haganah Archives, 14/23.
21. Bin-Nun to H.M. [Mossad], 7 September 1945 Haganah Archives, 14/23.
22. Sereni, lecture to the Aliyah Bet committee, 2 July 1942.
23. Uriel [Eshel] to the S[upreme] C[ommand of the Haganah], 2 February 1944, Haganah Archives, 14/20.
24. Bibi, *Ha-mahteret ha-tziyyonit-halutzit*, pp. 669–70.
25. Sereni to Jewish Agency, 3 February 1943, CZA, S25/5289.
26. Kadoorie, 'From Ish Maoz'.
27. Guttman, 'Excerpts'.
28. Sereni, minutes of a Histadrut executive committee meeting, 31 March 1943, p. 4. For references to the situation of young women, see also Sereni, meeting of the Aliyah Bet committee, 2 July 1942, Haganah Archives; Sereni to Jewish Agency, 3 February 1943, CZA, S25/5289; Guttman, 'Excerpts'; remarks by Sereni, minutes of Jewish Agency Executive meeting, 4 April 943.
29. El-Kabir, 'My Communal Life', pp. 125–6.
30. 'Package of News from Our Movement in the Exile and Our Seed Group in Palestine', no. 4, 11 August 1947, Hakibbutz Hameuhad Archives, division 2 foreign, container 1, file 10. My emphasis.
31. Golani [Eshel] to friends, 14 November 1943, Haganah Archives, 14/19.
32. G. [Eshel] to friends, 4 October 1943, Haganah Archives, 14/19.
33. Golani to friends, 23 October 1943, Haganah Archives, 14/19.
34. Golani to Yosefon [Eshel to Dobkin], 31 October 1943, CZA, S25/5289.
35. Minutes of a meeting of the emissaries to eastern lands, 26 December 1944, Haganah Archives, 14/20b.
36. Sh. [Shlomo Hillel, also known as Shamai], 29 July 1946, CZA, S6/1960.
37. Letter from Yiftah [Shemariah Guttman], received 14 September 1942, Haganah Archives, 14/19.
38. Letter from Abramovsky appended to the minutes of a meeting of the emissaries to eastern lands, 26 December 1944, Haganah Archives, 14/20b. See also similar remarks by Yehonatan Baharav: 'The type of local people here, who can't handle the conditions of clandestine aliyah, as well as their overall character, limits the options and rules out most of the routes' (Amir to Artzi, 23 October 1946, Haganah Archives, 14/25).
39. Bin-Nun to Hofshi [Baharav to Nameri], 6 February 1945, Haganah Archives, 14/21.
40. Bin-Nun to H.M., 5 July 1945, Haganah Archives, 14/22.
41. To Atara, 15 November, 1945, CZA, S25/3529.
42. This topic is beyond the scope of this work.

4
The Hehalutz Movement in Iraq

THE FIRST STEPS: BUILDING THE ZIONIST ORGANIZATION

The Mossad le-Aliyah Bet was founded in the late 1930s to circumvent the official immigration ceilings set by the British and to bring young pioneers to Palestine illegally. Beginning in May 1939, the Mossad, run jointly by Hehalutz and the Haganah, sought to breach the British White Paper policy, which severely restricted and ultimately banned Jewish immigration. The organization was headed by Shaul Avigur (Meirov), who was also a member of the national staff of the Haganah.

Until World War II, Mossad emissaries worked in central and eastern Europe and arranged the clandestine aliyah of a few thousand young pioneers. But as the gates out of Europe were gradually closed between 1939 and 1941, the emissaries, one after another, left the countries in which they were working and returned to Palestine. A year later, in the spring of 1942, the Mossad resumed activity, this time focusing on the Middle Eastern countries: Iraq, Iran, Syria, Lebanon and Egypt.

Remarks by Avigur in 1942 and when the war ended in 1945 reveal the Mossad's motives and objectives. The main motive, he said, was the impossibility of functioning in Europe anymore: 'We began the aliyah from the east when other countries were closed to us.'[1] The second motive was the hope of reaching tens of thousands of Polish refugees in Asiatic Russia overland and bringing them to Palestine. It was also expected that young people from Middle Eastern countries would move to Palestine en masse in the wake of the shocks they had experienced. As Avigur said in a lecture in June 1945:

> The riots in Baghdad on the first and second of June 1941, too, made the Jews of Baghdad somewhat aware, at least for a while, of the need for aliyah, and then a wild [disorganized] wave tried to come to Palestine… This situation also spurred our members to greater activity…[2]

Along with the news of spontaneous aliyah from Iraq, the Mossad received leaflets distributed by a self-defence organization by the name of Shabab al-Inkaz ['Rescue Youth'], founded in Baghdad by a group of teenagers,[3] as well as reports that Jews were furnishing themselves with guns and that National Military Organization (IZL) members were helping Shabab al-Inkaz. The Mossad was concerned that 'if we don't take any immediate action in the field of aliyah and in the field of defense, the Babylonian community in Jerusalem and Baghdad will fall into the hands of the IZL'.[4]

Thus the prospects of organizing aliyah from Iraq fitted in well with the Mossad's overall plan of action for the Middle East. The Mossad thought it would be able to take advantage of the recent awakening in the community, and especially the local initiative to establish Shabab al-Inkaz, in order to set up a base of action in Iraq as a link in the chain from the USSR to Palestine and to arrange for the aliyah of hundreds and perhaps thousands of local young people who were just waiting for a guiding hand.

Three emissaries were selected for the job: Enzo Sereni, Shemariah Guttman, and Ezra Kadoorie. Sereni (1905–1944), a native of Rome, was among the founders of Givat Brenner and an activist in Mapai and the Histadrut, and he had worked as a Hehalutz emissary to Germany and the United States in the 1920s and 1930s. His task was to represent the underground organization and to help the other emissaries with whatever they needed. As a legal cover, he was appointed to represent the construction company, Solel Boneh, in Baghdad and take care of their workers while they were in the city on their way to the oil facilities in Abadan, Mosul or Kirkuk, or on their way back to Palestine. The Irish-born Shemariah Guttman was a member of Kibbutz Na'an and a counsellor in the Hanoar Ha'oved Vehalomed youth movement. Ezra Kadoorie, who had moved as a child to Palestine from Iraq, was a member of Kibbutz Maoz Haim and an activist in Hanoar Ha'oved. He was chosen for the job because of his proficiency in the Arabic dialect spoken by the Jews of Baghdad and his familiarity with their customs. Guttman and Kadoorie, who went to Iraq illegally, operated there underground.

The emissaries' first months in Iraq were devoted to getting organized, making initial contacts and figuring out how best to operate. One of their first acts was to disband Shabab al-Inkaz and found a new defence organization—a branch of the Palestine-based Haganah. They justified this by citing the weakness of the local organization and its use of improper administrative methods. But the result was that they eliminated a competing organization, spared themselves the need to take the local leadership into account and ensured their total control of the new organization. The members of Shabab al-Inkaz were invited to join the Haganah on an individual basis.[5]

In addition to founding the defence organization, the emissaries sought to establish connections with teenagers. To do so, they worked through families that were already supportive of Zionism: former Ahiever members and especially the Sehayek family, in whose home they lived. They soon recruited about 300 young people, who formed groups to study Hebrew and to hear lectures about Palestine and Zionism.

In the late summer of 1942, the emissaries sent two groups of prospective young immigrants to Palestine overland via Syria. Both groups were captured on the way, and they and their families complained bitterly to the emissaries. After some soul-searching, the emissaries reached the conclusion that the basic assumptions of their mission in Iraq had to be changed. Sereni articulated this in a long, detailed letter to the Mossad:

> If we thought before we came here and when we started our work that our main task would be to organize and encourage aliyah, today we have to admit that there is not much point in either of these activities… We are today eating the fruit of many years of neglect, and what we didn't do can't be corrected now through propaganda and creating one-day-old enthusiasm… We have to prepare for the future, to educate a generation of young people, to prepare a young guard that can do our work here. Forming a Zionist organization, a youth movement, a vanguard are the main tasks of the hour.[6]

Thus the foundations were laid for the Hehalutz movement in Iraq.

But then a problem arose: the Mossad's function was to organize clandestine aliyah. It was not its job to fund ongoing Zionist activity and it lacked the financial means to do so.

The solution was found when the Zionist Organization agreed to cover part of the cost of the educational and organizational activity This marked the start of a new era in relations between the Zionist Organization and Iraqi Jewry, a turning point whose most important operative manifestation was the Zionist movement in Iraq. The Mossad emissaries settled into the Baghdad Jewish community thoroughly familiarized themselves with the alleyways of the city and the clandestine aliyah routes, and formed connections that enabled them to come up with appropriate solutions to problems that cropped up over time. As the faithful emissaries of the Mossad, they were backed by the Yishuv establishment and were trusted by the Jewish Agency and its various departments. This trust prevented unnecessary disputes and enabled the emissaries to use their own judgement, which was essential given the poor communication between Iraq and Palestine. From this point on, Mossad activity served as a framework for a defence organization and a pioneering Zionist movement, in addition to arranging for legal and illegal aliyah. Several organizations provided budgets for various activities, and emissaries were dispatched over the years by various institutions: the Zionist Organization, the kibbutz movements, the Haganah, and so on. Nevertheless, relations between the Yishuv establishment and the Zionist activists in Iraq were handled through the Mossad.

THE ATTRACTION OF THE ZIONIST MOVEMENT

The Zionist movement in Iraq was shaped by several factors: the special circumstances in Iraq during the war years, the hostility of the Iraqi authorities to Zionist activity, the policy of the Zionist establishment in Palestine and the attitude of the Iraqi Jews toward Zionist activity. As the movement became more and more successful and its membership grew, it ran a greater risk of discovery by the authorities and had to conceal itself better, limit its numbers and focus on education and ideology. These moves built up its strength and prepared it for further growth and expansion.

The wartime circumstances in Iraq—the emergency government installed by the British, movements of armies through the Middle East, and the presence of Solel Boneh employees and British army volunteers from the Yishuv—were beneficial to Zionist activity in its early stages. Because they travelled frequently, the Palestinian Jews were able to carry mail between the emissaries and the Mossad, as well as books, newspapers, and other materials for the movement. They helped to transport the emissaries between Iraq and Palestine, and they smuggled weapons and a wireless to Iraq.[7] No less important was their contribution to educational activity in Hehalutz. The soldiers and Solel Boneh employees served as counsellors for Hehalutz in Baghdad, ran the local branch in Basra and, briefly (in 1942), ran the Kirkuk and Mosul branches, too. They were also involved in smuggling hundreds of Jews from Iraq to Palestine, including a few dozen Polish Jews from Anders' Army, which had made its way from the Soviet Union to the battlefields in the Middle East in 1942.

Solel Boneh also provided legal cover for a Mossad emissary who acted as unofficial Yishuv representative in Baghdad. Given the underground conditions in Iraq, this was extremely important. This emissary could stay in Baghdad openly while secretly running the movement. He was in contact with the covert emissaries, coordinated ties with the

Mossad, mediated between the soldiers from Palestine and the other emissaries and was involved in smuggling Jews out of the country. By virtue of his official position, the emissary had contacts with the ruling circles, including British and Iraqi officials, as well as with businessmen, wealthy Iraqis and leading figures in the Jewish community He took advantage of these social contacts to obtain intelligence on both political and defence matters, which was then passed on to Palestine. In times of crisis, the movement used these connections to free detainees, cover up incriminating evidence and bribe high-ranking officials, judges and policemen. The Iraqi authorities could not harm the Solel Boneh representative even if they suspected that he had overstepped the bounds of his job. At most they could deport him or refuse to extend his permit to be there, as they did to Sereni. The importance of the position became particularly evident in crisis situations, when the legal emissary was the only one carrying out emergency activities and keeping the organization going until the danger passed.

The illegality of the Zionist movement made routine activity difficult. Zionist ideological material could not be circulated openly in the newspapers and schools, and Zionist literature could not be distributed. The activities in Baghdad took place in the basements of Jews' homes, and anything that could not be held there, such as big parties, social gatherings, field trips and training farms—were rare and sometimes impossible.[8] The young people also knew that if they were caught by the authorities they would be subject to heavy fines and even imprisonment. Nevertheless, membership grew, reaching close to two thousand in mid-1948, up from a few hundred in 1942. What attracted Jewish youngsters in Baghdad to the Zionist movement?

It should be kept in mind that these were educated youngsters who sought meaning in their lives, and the content and ideology offered by the Zionist movement met their expectations. As part of the modern world, the Zionist movement took a favourable view of modern values and thus suited the psychology of the youngsters, who identified with modernization and with the ideas of the secular Jewish Enlightenment, which they had encountered in the schools run by the Jewish com-munity. Furthermore, the Jewish nationalism of the Zionist movement and its positive attitude toward the Jewish past (although not the Jewish present) attracted many youngsters who were still on the border between tradition and modernity. These young people came from traditional families and a traditional background. They did not reject Jewish life and did not want to give up their Jewish national identity—as advocates of the Iraqi orientation or members of the Communist Party were required to do—but they were critical of the traditional system and were seeking a new, modern mode of expression for their social and national feelings. In the Zionist movement they found a blend of old and new.

The movement also provided a substitute for community politics. The Hehalutz movement in Iraq, like Zionist youth movements throughout the Jewish world, saw itself as a social avant-garde and strove to be a leading element in Jewish society, while constantly voicing criticism of the community leadership and its methods of operation. These views went well with the sentiments and aspirations of educated youngsters from the lower middle class, who were powerless to exert an influence within the Jewish community. Although the Zionist movement could not give them an opportunity to become involved in the public affairs of the community, it offered them an alternative route that trained them for public leadership positions. Meanwhile, they made do with social mobility and the opportunity to move up the chain of command within the Zionist

organization as counsellors, members of committees, members of the secretariat, and aliyah activists. Although their activity was underground and they remained anonymous outside the movement, sometimes this actually gave them a sense of power. Toward the end of the period they even converted this feeling into real power.

Even if the Zionist-pioneering ideal was not the most important or main attraction, it was the solution that Zionism offered for the quandary and distress of Iraqi Jewish youth. The Zionist ideal channelled feelings of frustration, anger, and anxiety in a productive direction—to pioneering activism. The movement suggested aliyah as an option for those who sought to leave Iraq, and even if this was not always possible, waiting in line to emigrate gave them hope.

In addition to the ideological and social aspects, it should be remembered that the Zionist movement was a youth movement with a vibrant social life: dances, field trips and games. The mixed activity for boys and girls shattered the customary segregation of the sexes and was another major attraction.

By establishing a defence organization, the Zionist movement offered a model for solving the problem of physical insecurity that had plagued the Jewish community since the riots of June 1941. Although the effectiveness of the Haganah in the case of riots is questionable (see chapter 7), it at least offered a psychological solution by providing a sense of security and national pride. Moreover, the defence organization provided an activity framework for those who had no interest in Zionist ideology; some of the Haganah members came from affluent and influential segments of the community, and although they had a Jewish-national consciousness, it was not necessarily a Zionist one. Zionist concepts did not speak to them; they had no interest in moving to Palestine; and they were especially averse to the call for *hagshamah* [fulfilment], the Zionist term that in the 1940s meant aliyah and settlement on a kibbutz. Nevertheless, as members of the Haganah, these young people were part of the Zionist system.

Furthermore, there was a consensus in the Iraqi Jewish community about love of the Land of Israel and about the study of Hebrew and Jewish history, the teaching of which had been restricted or banned by the Iraqi authorities. Sometimes the adults' favourable attitude, at least at first, stemmed from a misunderstanding of the modern, activist and practical meaning of Zionism. This positive attitude created a sympathetic environment that was essential for underground Zionist activity The movement empowered its members to realize their social and political aspirations. It taught them how to work together, organize, and operate in an egalitarian setting. It fostered national pride, faith in the rightness of their path and self-confidence, and it gave them power because the Jews perceived them as the representatives of the Yishuv and later the State of Israel.

BUILDING THE MOVEMENT

The activity began with the study of Hebrew. Hebrew was the least common denominator for the emissaries and the young Baghdadi Jews. Given the prevailing cultural and national suppression, Hebrew symbolized Jewish national revival and a protest against the condition of the community. In a letter dated February 1943, Sereni reported on the reopening of the Hebrew library that had been established by Ahiever and then closed in 1937,[9] and on dozens of newly formed study groups focusing on Hebrew, Jewish history,

Zionism and other subjects. The groups were organized as underground cells, each with its own counsellor.

In early 1943 it was reported that the emissaries were working with about 500 young people; although most of them were in Baghdad, others were in Basra and Kirkuk, where soldiers and Solel Boneh employees acted as counsellors. The members of the movement—about a third of them girls and women—were mostly high-school students, clerks, and functionaries, but some were merchants or attorneys or worked in other occupations. Most were between 17 and 25 years old, although there were even a few in their thirties.[10] The older ones were former Ahiever members who served as counsellors and helped the emissaries teach Hebrew. Some of them even helped Sereni to form social connections with leading community figures and with officials in the Iraqi administration.

On Passover of 1943, Hehalutz held its first conference, which Guttman referred to as the 'First Founding Council of the Hehalutz Federation in Iraq'.[11] Close to 100 members from the 35 groups in Baghdad took part. For the first time, members of the different groups had an opportunity to meet each other, and the fact that the principle of compartmentalization was disregarded attested to the emissaries' increased confidence in themselves and in the movement they had founded. A few weeks later, while in Palestine on a visit, Guttman told the secretariat of the Histadrut executive committee how the event had been organized:

> Bringing together 100 members at this time was very difficult. A table was set with bottles of wine and all sorts of eastern foods, a guitar and a record player were brought in, so that the council could be turned into a wedding celebration when necessary. A decision was made as to who would lower the flag and the posters on the walls in order to turn the meeting into a wild party. None of the members, other than the few organizers, knew in advance to what house they would be going. And the house was our central one, from which we disseminate our teachings. We didn't want to have the meeting there, but it's very hard to hold an activity in private homes.[12]

The conference officially proclaimed the founding of Hehalutz and its affiliation with the World Hehalutz Federation and the Histadrut; it also proclaimed the value of work and the importance of aliyah and the Hebrew language. Members were taught a special greeting to use when they met, as a sign of their secret bond as Hehalutz members.[13]

The conference was an important step in the development of the Zionist movement. Its purpose was to set up an umbrella organization for the various study and guidance groups; to demonstrate the strength and power of the movement to its members; and to proclaim the movement's ideological principles. This step was also directed at the Zionist leadership institutions in the Yishuv, the Mossad and Hakibbutz Hameuhad. The idea was to demonstrate the movement's achievements and to declare its self-definition and its ties with the Yishuv establishment. The conference resolutions did not mention the political affiliation of Hehalutz in Iraq, because Mapai was on the verge of a split at the time. Although all three emissaries were members of Hakibbutz Hameuhad, Guttman and Kadoorie were affiliated with Si'ah Bet [Faction B], which would later split from Mapai (in 1944), whereas Sereni belonged to the faction that remained in Mapai. The soldiers

who worked as counsellors came from the entire spectrum of labour parties. Therefore, there was a tacit agreement to teach Iraqi Jewish youngsters the principles that all the settlement movements shared and to ignore the different shades of the spectrum, that is, ideological differences. But despite its 'generality', the Iraqi Hehalutz movement was definitely affiliated with Hakibbutz Hameuhad. Through stories and descriptions, a bond was created between the youngsters and the emissary's kibbutz, its geographical and human landscape, and its way of life. This method gave the Hehalutz movement in Iraq its latent and patent political affinity. Although supposedly general and nonpartisan, the movement essentially belonged to Hakibbutz Hameuhad.

THE FIRST CRISIS AND THE RECOVERY OF HEHALUTZ

The Zionist activity could not help but attract the attention of the Iraqi and British security services alike. As the movement became more influential and its successes or failures increased in number, they obtained more and more information about it. Sereni, who was particularly prominent, was suspected by the British of taking advantage of his status as a representative of Solel Boneh to organize underground Zionist activity.[14] In early June 1943, he was forced to leave the country.

In the autumn of 1942, Polish-Jewish refugees began to arrive in Iran and Iraq, as the free Polish forces (Anders' Army) were transported from Russia to Iran and from there to the Mediterranean front.[15] The Zionist underground helped some of the Jewish soldiers desert, smuggled them along the Shatt al-Arab from the Iranian coast to Basra, and from there took them to Baghdad disguised as Arabs. Other Polish-Jewish soldiers deserted and reached the movement in Baghdad with the help of liaisons from Palestine. They then waited a few days or weeks for a military convoy to take them to Palestine. The security services in the area-British, Iraqi and Polish—were all aware of this movement. One Polish agent, a Jew by the name of Arthur Landes, joined the Jewish deserters and managed to infiltrate the Zionist movement in Iraq and emigrate to Palestine. In early July 1943, he returned to Iraq to unmask the activists working on clandestine aliyah. Meir Gelbard, the soldier who functioned as liaison between the Mossad and the Polish deserters, was detained for questioning and letters in his possession were seized. Everyone involved in the activity, emissaries and locals alike, left Baghdad. Some of them went into hiding and others were transported to Palestine.

Despite the information they had obtained, the British were unable to follow the thread and destroy the organizational infrastructure of the Iraqi Zionist movement. Very few local Jews were suspected, and those few were soon brought to Palestine. Their families were interrogated but could not give the police much information. The British were unable to prove the involvement of additional soldiers in smuggling people out of the country or to prevent them from continuing. Kitling, the CID officer from Palestine who was sent to Iraq around this time on an information-gathering mission, confirmed in a January 1944 report what the British already knew: that the Zionist movement in Iraq was small, paralysed and powerless:

> From what I learned, I do not think there is more than an underground Zionist movement in Iraq (primarily in Baghdad) that is poorly organized

> if at all and very weak. Its active members seem to be young people. The older generation, which is afraid of the reaction from the Arabs…is staying away from Zionism.[16]

In October 1943, Aryeh Eshel of the Jewish Agency Political Department arrived in Iraq as Sereni's replacement. Eshel formed ties with various prominent figures in the Jewish community and with Iraqi and British officials in the administration;[17] he then took advantage of these connections to help the Zionist movement and obtain political intelligence for the Yishuv. He sent reports to the Political Department on the Iraqi regime,[18] Iraq's foreign relations, its arms buildup[19] and its attitude toward the Jews and the Palestine question. From this point on, the emissaries also dealt with intelligence.

In early 1944, the movement began to recover. The disintegration that had occurred during the crisis led the emissaries to draw several conclusions. They understood that the movement's dependence on them put its survival at risk and that there had to be a local leadership made up of talented, devoted, loyal young people who would handle the brunt of the activity. By broadening and deepening the ideological education that they provided, they would develop a cadre of counsellors and train them to hold leadership positions. This policy was also meant to satisfy the emotional and ideological needs of the members, who were rebelling against their environment and sought new content and meaning. The movement could offer them both national values and new humanistic and social values.

Another conclusion involved the structure of Hehalutz. Failure to comply with the basic rules of secrecy had been one of the factors behind the disintegration of the movement. The emissaries concluded that the way to prevent a recurrence was to be meticulous about maintaining a compartmentalized hierarchy, headed by functional institutions run by local young people, so that activity could proceed smoothly even during and after crises.

Implementation of the organizational conclusions was supposed to ensure the stability and independence of the Iraqi Zionist movement; the ideological education was supposed to preserve the ideological commitment to the parent movement in Palestine and to ensure that the independence was limited to administrative matters.

The movement's recovery was based on three components: numerical expansion, new segments of society and the establishment of institutions. In order for the movement to grow, it needed more counsellors (there were 25 in January 1944) and the counsellors had to have more extensive knowledge of Zionism.[20] A few began to study Hebrew and Zionist literature seriously According to the emissaries: 'This handful developed greatly in the past few months and gained not only additional knowledge about the history of the movement but also the beginning of independent thinking, increased responsibility, and pioneering readiness.'[21] The others were required to take part in activities to enhance their Zionist and socialist education and their knowledge of Hebrew, and additional members were trained as counsellors. This was essential in order to increase membership because, as Eshel put it, 'If we had a large number of counsellors, we would be able to reach a thousand or more with no difficulty.'[22] Although they did not reach a thousand at this point, the movement did grow considerably. By May the number of members was up to 500—a third of them women—between the ages of 17 and 25.[23]

The new members altered the demographic and social balance in the movement and its values. Until then the prominent members had been former Ahiever members in their twenties who had families and 'were more interested in a movement for the study of Hebrew and "national philanthropy" than in a movement for pioneering *hagshamah* [aliyah and settlement on kibbutzim]'. But as the movement grew, it attracted more and more teenagers, 'who accept the movement's dictates (and not just the movement's message) much more easily and who can devote much more time to the work'.[24] These youngsters were mostly high-school students from the middle and lower middle classes. Hehalutz now took on the character of a youth movement.

Although Hehalutz made no headway in the upper middle and upper classes, it did have some members who came from affluent or prominent families with positions of influence in the community.[25] Among them was a group of students from the American school in Baghdad. These youngsters showed no interest in the educational activity and did not take part in the Hebrew study groups, but they were willing to help the movement in its time of need. The most prominent members of this group were Eitan (Saleh) Shemesh, Yehezkel Yehuda, Uri Shefer (Albert Babai), Avraham Ben-Mordekhai (Tawfiq Murad) and Gourji Shasha. All of these people subsequently played key roles in the Zionist movement—both in the Haganah and in organizing clandestine aliyah (see chapter 7). Nevertheless, as far as the emissaries were concerned, the future of the Iraqi Zionist movement lay not with them, but with the poorer group that, as Eshel put it, 'is strongly attached to the movement and devotes all its energy to it, is anxious about every small failure and happy about every success'.[26] This was the activism that the emissaries had hoped for.

In terms of organization, the system of underground cells (or 'groups', as the emissaries called them)—study groups of about ten people, each led by a counsellor—was strictly retained. The compartmentalization that had been breached at the first conference on Passover 1943 was intensified. The soldiers and emissaries were warned not to let anyone other than the small number of counsellors know about their activity.

The administrative institutions of Hehalutz—a council and committees—were founded around this time. The council was the highest-level institution in the movement. In early 1944 it comprised nine male counsellors, two female counsellors, and the emissaries. But, in fact, the council was merely an advisory body Although the emissaries believed that the council could fulfil its function only if leadership was passed on to the youngsters, they did not let this happen because they considered them incapable of independent thinking and so not yet ripe for the task.[27] The emissaries therefore continued to run the Zionist movement themselves.

In addition to the council, there were several administrative committees: the organization committee, with three members and the emissaries, which oversaw and took care of the acceptance of new members; the aliyah committee, comprising five members in addition to the emissaries, which selected candidates for aliyah and sought ways of smuggling them there; and the Jewish National Fund committee and the culture committee, which were composed of Hehalutz members only. The former dealt with fundraising and the latter with organizing field trips, publishing literature, and so on. The emissaries made sure to include one or two young women on each committee. The committees were an important means of ensuring involvement by members in decision making and of creating a solid leadership class within the movement. However, very few

people served on the committees, and many of the tasks were assigned to the small circle of serious, dedicated counsellors.[28]

The movement's work plan for the second half of 1944 emphasized broadening and intensifying the counsellors' Zionist education, training new counsellors, increasing the number of female counsellors, and training a group to move to rural settlements in Palestine.[29]

THE SECOND CRISIS AND THE RECOVERY OF HEHALUTZ

In the summer of 1944, in the midst of its expansion, the Zionist movement once again faced a serious crisis when the authorities, acting on a tip by an informer, seized material being sent to Palestine.[30] It was not hard work by the police but carelessness on the part of the Zionists that led to the first major crisis in the history of the Iraqi Zionist movement. The letters that were seized mentioned real names, code names, addresses and details about clandestine aliyah routes. Also seized was a booklet about the 1941 Farhud and the lessons learned from it; on the title page was a drawing of an Iraqi soldier pointing a gun at a Jewish mother holding her baby This booklet, the emissaries were told, particularly enraged the Iraqi officials. The Iraqis now knew that an underground Zionist organization run by agents of the Zionist movement existed in the Baghdad Jewish community, that this organization had ongoing ties with the Yishuv, and that is was—through its very existence and its ties with a hostile entity—undermining the foundations of the Iraqi state.

From the Iraqi government's perspective, this discovery was intolerable. Although there had been rumours as early as the summer of 1943 about activity inspired by Palestinian Jewish agents, the suspicions could not be confirmed at the time and it was assumed that the Zionist activity was limited and uninfluential.[31] Now the police had all the incriminating evidence and merely had to arrest the people named in the letters or known to the driver who was carrying the letters. The charges were also much more serious: instead of abetting desertion and smuggling deserters to Palestine, they were accused of undermining state sovereignty by establishing a hostile underground organization, inciting against the Iraqi people and government, and arranging the smuggling of young Iraqis to Palestine. This time the accused were not foreign soldiers in the British army who had received assistance from a few local families but foreign agents and scores of young people from the local Jewish community, some of them from prominent, affluent families. And if the desertion incident was chiefly a matter of British concern, the discovery of the Zionist underground was very definitely of interest to the Iraqi authorities. The capture of a few members could head potentially to the exposure of the entire underground organization through interrogations, imprisonment and sensational trials that could affect public opinion and the rabble in the streets. If the authorities were to discover the Haganah, too, things would be much, much worse. The risk of discovery of the underground movement jeopardized not only further Zionist activity in Iraq but the survival of the entire Jewish community. The affair was liable to serve as a pretext for accusing the Jewish community of treason against the Iraqi nation and of serving the Zionist movement, which was perceived as an imperialistic enemy of the Arab nation.[32] The emissaries were aware of the danger:

> The political character is very obvious to anyone who wants to see it as a plot against state security; there is a significant possibility that the incident will be linked with the entire community and it [the community] will be turned into a scapegoat.[33]

As soon as the material was seized, the emissaries checked what information was included in the letters, and members whose names were mentioned left their homes and went into hiding. Four were sent to Palestine on forged passports. A 1,300-book library was moved to safer quarters, the movement's work was halted and the emissaries Yehoshua Givoni and Ezra Kadoorie went into hiding and then returned to Palestine. Aryeh Abramovsky took charge of the affair (on extrication from the crisis, see chapter 5). When things calmed down, it was discovered that about half of the 45 groups were left without counsellors. Many groups were missing members, since some of them had gone to Palestine and others had quit. Groups had to be merged, the number of counsellors increased, and a new counsellor training seminar organized. The seminar was held after Givoni returned to Iraq in mid-October 1944.[34] Givoni stayed in Iraq for another full year, until October 1945, fulfilling a paramount educational role in the Iraqi Zionist movement. He gave it ideological depth, moulded its educational image, and organized a cadre of counsellors and activists who would lead the movement until its dissolution in 1951. Hehalutz continued to attract youngsters from the middle and lower middle classes, Eshel reported, 'not because we have made such a beautiful impression, but because reality has forced the youngsters to find new footholds and we are known to offer a solution'.[35]

The second conference of the Hehalutz movement in Iraq convened in December 1944 with 50 participants, including delegates from Basra and Mosul.[36] The movement, which had declared itself part of the World Hehalutz Federation at its first conference on Passover 1943, now proclaimed its objectives: *hagshamah*, study of the Hebrew language, Jewish independence, defence, and full, equal participation by women. The movement also proclaimed its association with the Zionist Organization and the Jewish National Fund and its commitment to aliyah, a life of labour, and membership in the Histadrut. As at the first conference, the movement refrained from stating its association with Hakibbutz Hameuhad, and the resolutions were phrased in such a way as to be consistent with the decision by the Jewish Agency Executive to establish a uniform pioneering movement in eastern countries. For the emissaries, however, Hehalutz was and would remain connected to Hakibbutz Hameuhad. Eshel expressed his satisfaction in a letter the day after the conference:

> Yesterday was a great day for us, the day of our movement's second conference. It's such a shame that you couldn't see the young counselors, the people of Baghdad and Basra with their Hebrew identity, their decisiveness, and their dedication, that you didn't see how a cohesive group of men and women, proudly bearing the idea of revival, was formed here out of human dust… Our movement has emerged from childhood, that the movement is no longer based on plain enthusiasm but on *awareness*. Now I believe that quite a lot of the counselors (and especially the young ones) are capable of gray, mundane lives of tenacious

> *hagshamah*, and the regular guidance activities are coming more and more to resemble what we had as our goal.[37]

In 1945, Hehalutz was at the height of an organizational and ideological consolidation process. All the committees formed the year before were functioning on a regular basis. Training seminars were being held for new counsellors, the national central committee convened annually on Passover, and the day-to-day activities of members and counsellors reflected a thriving organization: the movement was putting out newsletters, booklets and information sheets in Hebrew and Arabic, and members paid dues and contributed to the Jewish National Fund.[38] Membership increased substantially, reaching 1,700 in late 1945:1, 200 in Baghdad, 340 in Basra, and the rest in smaller branches (see below).[39]

The ideological Zionist revolution began to manifest itself among the veteran counsellors. They had worked for the movement for several years, served on various committees, attended the national conferences of the central committee, and taken part in major organizational decisions. These counsellors—the cream of the crop, who continued working after dozens of others had left for Palestine or dropped out of the movement—saw themselves as a vanguard fulfilling the values of the Zionist movement and considered it their mission to lead their people. These ideas were expressed in letters sent from Iraq to friends in Palestine, in speeches given at festive events and especially in movement newsletters.[40] Some examples are remarks by counsellors in *Derekh Hehalutz*, the newsletter of the Hehalutz counsellors (Tammuz 1945):

1. We are a pioneering movement practicing *hagshamah*, not a movement promoting the love of Zion… We are the first in line, walking at the head of the line. The fate of an entire Jewish community has been placed in our hands.[41]
2. If we, the vanguard of the nation, do not go up, who will?… We have to proceed as a vanguard before the nation; otherwise we have no right to bear the name Hehalutz [literally, 'the vanguard'].[42]
3. This is a total revolution in life: a change of social life, family, labour, language, climate, a change of the entire content of life. The transition from our lives here to kibbutz life is a transition from parasitic life to productive life. What gave our comrades the strength to keep going in the new life, to persist with the personal revolution? The ideal and faith in the ideal.[43]
4. The seminar taught us to dare to think about ourselves and about our nation, about the possibility of improving ourselves in a way that leads to a goal. We can no longer continue with the old life.[44]
5. Comrades, we are the nuclei of the nation and of the movement.[45]

And finally, an excerpt from remarks made at a meeting of the national central committee of Hehalutz (5 April 1945):

> Our aim is to deepen our education, [to deepen] Zionist awareness. We have to grow and grow and grow… We have to organize lots of young people and lots of working youngsters in our ranks. Our community will not deal with the neglected youth. We are the only ones on whom the fate of the Jews depends. We are not answerable to anyone, just to our

> conscience. We have come to this despite the danger, despite the sacrifice that it entails…[46]

It is hard to know to what extent these remarks reflected the intensity with which the national and pioneering values promoted by the emissaries from Palestine were internalized. In any event, they gave the emissaries the feeling that they had succeeded in establishing a stronghold of pioneering Zionist culture in Iraq that would snowball until it encompassed the entire Jewish community. The first step in the inclusion of Iraqi Jewry in the new Israeli nation was a success. As the emissaries reported:

> The movement developed from Hebrew to individual *hagshamah*. The big change in the movement's image occurred in the past two years… The national movement has about 100 counselors, the products of education instilled by the emissaries and the seminars. A very dedicated group. Most of the counselors are women…who bear the movement's mission proudly and courageously.[47]

With the help of these idealistic and determined activists, the emissaries sought to cope with their problems, which became more and more complicated in the mid-1940s.

CONFRONTING PROBLEMS FROM WITHIN

When World War II ended, the foreign armies left Iraq and the soldiers and workers from Palestine returned home. From now on Hehalutz had to deal with its increasing separation from its Yishuv wellsprings, mounting pressure from the local authorities, a shortage of emissaries and an almost total blockage of the aliyah routes. Meanwhile, the Communist Party, which was functioning almost openly at the time, became stronger and appeared to offer young people achievable solutions to the Jewish problem in Iraq. It was a time of relative calm and tranquillity for the Jewish community; tension and anxiety decreased, reducing the urgency of finding solutions to the problem of Jewish existence in Iraq. Only in late 1947, shortly before the outbreak of the War of Independence, was the Jewish community's security again threatened.

The worst problem was the shortage of emissaries. Whereas in 1945 alone there were four emissaries in Iraq (Meir Shilon, Yehoshua Givoni, Yehoshua Baharav [Rabinowitz] and Dan Ram), in the three years from 1946 to 1948 there were only five: Yonatan Baharav (Rabinowitz, Yehoshua's brother), an aliyah emissary; Shlomo Hillel and Yerahmiel Asa, emissaries to Hehalutz; Mordechai Ben-Zur (Binchevsky), a Haganah emissary who arrived in December 1946; and Yehuda Rabinowitz, an aliyah emissary who arrived in October 1947. During much of this period there was only one emissary in the country.

Several factors contributed to the reduction in the number of the emissaries. First, as many emissaries as possible were being sent to Europe. Second, conditions for Zionist activity in Iraq had worsened, and the risk had increased due to the difficulty of finding prospective emissaries with an oriental appearance who would not look too conspicuous

in Iraq. Third, Mapai and its political rivals, especially Ahdut Ha'avoda, were embroiled in conflicts and disagreements over the selection of emissaries to the Diaspora.[48]

The shortage of emissaries reduced the tension and quality of the activity and led to the departure of disappointed members. Fewer new counsellors were trained, and the shortage of counsellors grew worse. To overcome the problem, the best of those about to leave for Palestine were asked to delay their emigration in order to continue working as counsellors. But not all of them agreed to defer the realization of their dream of aliyah. Moreover, many counsellors were also Haganah members or commanders, and a substantial percentage of them lessened their involvement in Hehalutz or even quit in order to put all their energy into the more attractive Haganah.[49] Others neither emigrated nor worked as counsellors but dropped out of Zionist activity, primarily because of the good economic conditions, relative political calm and easing of the security-related tension. The shortage of counsellors limited Hehalutz's ability to grow. Hillel gave this a Zionist interpretation:

> Most of the Jews here have no concept and understanding of what is called 'catastrophic Zionism'. They do not sense that this is a vital matter, and they are perfectly satisfied with their status here, because the comfortable economic conditions here blind them completely.[50]

At the time, political tension and insecurity were worse in Palestine than in Iraq.

Clandestine aliyah became more difficult in 1946, and the many failures at establishing routes through the desert (see chapter 6) lessened the attraction of the Zionist movement for Jewish youngsters and increased pessimism among members.[51] It could not offer an immediate solution to young people who wished to leave Iraq and could not even enable its long-time members to fulfil their dreams and carry out the movement's directive by moving to Palestine. In addition, the feeling that the Yishuv institutions were neglecting and discriminating against activity in Iraq left counsellors and members disappointed and disgruntled.

Thus, just a few months after World War II, the Yishuv emissaries realized that they had to cope with both the problem of apathy toward Zionism in the Jewish community and demoralization within the movement itself, as well as to prepare for a deterioration in the political situation of Iraqi Jewry, which they had no doubt would come. They chose to confront the problem on organizational, social and educational levels alike, emphasizing Zionist indoctrination, as they had during previous crises. Hillel reported in September 1946:

> I am now stopping almost all numerical growth in the movement and am trying to intensify education among those who are here, especially the counselors, because I'm afraid the movement here will experience major shocks, since aliyah is very limited and the issue of searches will undoubtedly increase, and it would be best, instead of adding more people who will fall at the first [burst of] 'noise', to immunize and strengthen those who are already here.[52]

The emissaries expelled members who were not serious and devoted enough; organized more seminars for counsellors; expanded sports education, including camps and hikes; and emphasized an active social life: parties, social gatherings and generally emerging from the basements and overcoming the concomitant worries and fears.

Equally important was the emissaries' decision to emphasize social education and downplay ideological education.[53] Experiential education reinforced feelings of brotherhood, friendship and shared fate, and was intended to give the underground the stamina to keep going in times of hardship and crisis. In October 1947, while on a visit to Palestine, Yerahmiel Asa reported on the success of the new programme:

> The number of members has dropped, but the ideological bond with the movement is stronger. The movement is an integral part of the member's life. The members devote almost all their free time …The cadre of activists is serious and can be built on. They do the work independently—with guidance from us.[54]

REORGANIZATION IN THE BASRA BRANCH

Other problems came up in the port city of Basra. The local branch of the Zionist movement was founded in the summer of 1942 in connection with the smuggling of Jewish deserters from Anders' Army.[55] A group of local young people formed ties with the soldiers from Palestine, and the soldiers began teaching and lecturing about Zionism. Two members of the branch took part in a national seminar in Baghdad in late 1944, and ten delegates from Basra were sent to the second conference (December 1944). David Hakham, the leading activist in the branch, reported to the conference that there were 160 members, including ten counsellors.[56]

The Zionist movement in Basra was heavily dependent on the soldiers from Palestine, because they were the sole source of information on Zionism and the only ones who could teach Hebrew. But the soldiers could work as counsellors only in their free time and did not always have enough time to devote to it. Because turnover among the soldiers was high and was dependent, of course, on the British army, regular activity was difficult. Furthermore, not all the soldiers were suitable to be counsellors, and there was a definite need for a guiding hand. Finally, most of the soldiers were city boys, whereas Hehalutz trained people for kibbutz life.[57]

In late 1944 and early 1945, Gideon Golani and Aliza Biron (Louise Shabtai-Katan), two of the leading counsellors in Baghdad, were sent to Basra, and Yehoshua Givoni went there to organize a seminar for counsellors.[58] Givoni found a warm, supportive Jewish community, which he described in a letter to Avigur:

> We have a nice branch there with 200 members. A dedicated, loyal group of counselors, but weak in doctrine. Five of the people from the school [the soldiers] are involved as counselors and are on the branch council. The small-town character is evident for better and for worse: too much publicity and less secrecy, worse conditions for the girls, but also more simplicity, more cordiality, more family-style friendly concern. The

> family that lends its house to meetings is warmer than in the capital. Less severity, greater behavioral freedom. I've heard the Voice of Jerusalem blaring from homes in the evenings. The movement is better known than it is in Berman [Baghdad], and there is a lot of support for it.[59]

During Givoni's stay in Basra, the branch institutions (the council and committees) were reorganized and some of the new counsellors started their jobs.

As the two cities had little contact with each other and because there was no Yishuv emissary in Basra to serve as an authority figure, the Zionist movement in Basra was headed by local people and followed different patterns of organization from those in Baghdad. Because the emissaries were afraid to make the long trek to the port city, they rarely went there. Unlike in Baghdad, the Zionist movement in Basra was run by a secretariat made up of its three local founders: Shmuel Moriah (Mu'allem), Yoav Biron (Katan), and David Hakham, the grandson of Rabbi Yehezkel Hakham, who had served as chief rabbi of the community and the head of its rabbinical court until 1941.[60] There were also ideological differences: in Baghdad emphasis was placed on pioneering education as an element of socialist Zionism, whereas in Basra a general Zionist line prevailed, with the main focus on the study of Hebrew and on Zionism, aliyah and settlement. This trend developed because the soldiers who worked as counsellors in Basra came from cities and were careful not to stress political nuances or to inform members about the existence of different ideologies and political parties in Palestine.

Throughout the years of Zionist activity in Iraq, the Jews of Basra demanded an emissary from Palestine. Their failure to get one aggravated relations between the Basra branch and the Hehalutz headquarters in Baghdad. Probably the tension also had to do with the traditional enmity and suspicion in the Iraqi provinces vis-à-vis the capital, home to the representatives of the hated central government.[61] Differences between the two Jewish communities were probably another factor: the Baghdad community was larger, more affluent, more modern and more educated than the Basra community. Quite likely, the Basra Jews' distrust of the Jews of Baghdad was a reaction to a feeling of superiority among the latter, and the presence of the emissaries in Baghdad was perceived as discrimination. The people from Basra claimed further that membership in their branch exceeded that in Baghdad relative to the total Jewish population, and that more counsellors and a permanent emissary who would take them under his wing would make much greater expansion possible.[62]

In late April 1945, an emissary from Palestine—Yisrael Hertz—arrived in Basra, but he was not the one they had hoped for. Hertz was from Hashomer Hatza'ir and had been brought to Baghdad, over the Mossad's objections, by soldiers who belonged to his movement. His arrival elicited vehement opposition from the Mossad emissaries, and as an interim solution it was decided to send him to Basra. Hertz worked in Basra for only six weeks before being forced to return to Palestine due to pressure exerted on him personally and on Hashomer Hatza'ir in Palestine.

In late July 1946, about a year after the incident with Hertz, Shlomo Hillel traveled to Basra to rehabilitate the branch. At the end of a one-month stay, he reported on the situation there:

> Things here are much worse than I had previously thought and than you imagined. [After] the affair that began with the expulsion of the Hashomer Hatza'ir man, there began a series of disputes with the Tel Aviv [Baghdad] branch and with the entire movement countrywide, which has been getting steadily worse. Throughout this time the branch had no emissary to guide it, and all the work was done exclusively by locals. And picture, instead of work and education, constant friction here over matters of honor and disputes. This is the state in which I found the branch. With no activity Most of the people have been in the movement for more than four years and many of them have no thoughts of aliyah… It was completely impossible to work until I eliminated the confusion and the disputes. And now I find that the only way is to establish a 'new generation' of educators and central people in the movement.[63]

It is not clear what Hillel meant by 'honor and disputes', but it is interesting that similar remarks were made when the emissaries decided to disband Shabab al-Inkaz and establish their own defence organization[64] and when they were trying to shut down Hashomer Hatza'ir activity in the city (see chapter 3). Hillel installed new counsellors who had taken part in a seminar that he conducted, and forced the previous counsellors to leave, demanding that they move to Palestine or quit. The three branch leaders were also neutralized: Yoav Biron (Katan) went to Baghdad in late 1945 and headed the aliyah committee, Shmuel Moriah replaced him in late 1946 and Hakham quit.

No emissary arrived in Basra in the next few years either, and the branch continued to suffer from crises and people quitting. Despite these problems, it was very important to have a branch in Basra. It was the means by which the Zionist movement expanded its ties with a community of 10,000 Jews and later reached the small towns nearby. This community was especially important due to its strategic location on one of the main transit routes between Iraq and Iran, a factor that would be of great importance to the Zionist movement in the future.

EXPANSION INITIATIVES

While struggling to preserve what it had already accomplished, the Zionist movement attempted—perhaps as a result of feelings of despair and fatigue in Baghdad and Basra—to inaugurate new spheres of activity: extending its influence to broader segments of the population, younger age groups, and peripheral communities in the northern, southern and central parts of the country

An important step in this direction was the establishment of a youth movement. The foundations of Hehalutz Hatza'ir were laid as early as December 1944, in a resolution of the national central committee.[65] Within a few months it already had 400 members, including four groups of working youngsters and a group of 16 teenage seamstresses.[66] Hehalutz Hatza'ir extended Zionist activity to youngsters aged 14 to 17 and of a lower socio-economic class. It attracted boys and girls from the poverty-stricken alleys of the Jewish quarter of Baghdad, both students and working youngsters, some of them illiterate teenagers who had never been to school. Meanwhile, the Zionist movement increased its

influence among youngsters from affluent neighbourhoods (Batawin and Karadeh) by letting them into the Haganah (see chapter 7).[67]

Hehalutz Hatza'ir was organized just like Hehalutz and had all of the same administrative committees. For purposes of coordination, a representative of the corresponding Hehalutz committee served on each of these committees.[68] Hehalutz Hatza'ir boosted the morale of the parent movement and made an educational and organizational contribution to it. The parent movement provided the counsellors while channelling the youngsters' ardour in productive directions. Working with the youngsters facilitated the gradual training of the counsellors, aided in their development and prepared them to hold other positions in Hehalutz.

The decision to establish a youth movement was no simple matter: the advantage of having the youngsters join the movement had to be weighed against concern that if they were caught they would break under pressure and jeopardize the entire underground. The positive decision indicates an increase in the self-confidence of the Iraqi Zionist movement, its willingness to take additional risks, and the importance that the emissaries attributed to moulding the teenagers. Mordekhai Bibi, a leading activist and a vigorous supporter of the idea, discussed the educational rationale:

> A young man who joins Hehalutz already has an Exilic seal imprinted on his life's goal. Such young men have a hard time erasing that Exilic seal later and switching to a life of work and toil. The opposite is true of a teenager, whose mind is fresh as dough and whom we can steer in the desirable direction. And then when he grows up he will become a young man whose body and mind are imbued with nationalism. Such young men will be the true rebels against life in Exile.[69]

Years of Zionist education, starting from a young age, were supposed to ensure deep internalization and implementation of the values of Hehalutz. Furthermore, the emissaries assumed that lower-class working youngsters, whose options in the economy and society were limited, would do better in rural settlements in Palestine than would their more educated, more affluent counterparts.[70] As for concern about letting such young people in on the secret of the movement, Bibi felt that if they were not accepted,

> Who is to make sure that they, too, don't fall into the black chasm of assimilation and national alienation? Who says that they won't join anti-Zionist movements when they grow up? And who knows what revolutionary storms will occur among these youngsters if you don't protect the direction of their minds? And if comrades ask about the steadfastness of the youngsters when put to the test, I reply that it depends on their education… We do not yet know and are not yet sure about the pioneers' ability to withstand a difficult test…[71]

The opportunity to take in and mould young teenagers overrode the risk of letting them in on the secret of the underground.

The rapid establishment of Hehalutz Hatza'ir attests to the organizational ability of Hehalutz, which provided the counsellors, and to the eagerness of hundreds of young

people to throng to its ranks.[72] This educational and ideological framework offered them social integration and a modern education. For some it was their first experience of learning to read and write and their first social encounter with Jews from higher social classes. To them, Hehalutz Hatza'ir syrnbolized not only a national aspiration but also hopes of social and cultural mobility.

Another area in which the Zionist movement demonstrated impressive ability was the establishment and operation of branches throughout Iraq. The idea of 'organizing new branches where Jews are concentrated and attempting to break through to the rural Jews in the north' was among the resolutions of the national central committee in April 1945.[73] This decision, too, attests to self-confidence and faith in the Zionist movement's ability to meet the challenge. The task required the assignment of counsellors to small towns and remote villages, where they would organize and lead groups of activists. This job called for the most experienced, gifted, and loyal counsellors from the Baghdad and Basra branches,[74] as well as funding for the counsellors who had to leave their homes and jobs and devote all their time to the task.[75] The job entailed numerous long trips and staying in small Jewish communities in remote areas where the mere presence of a stranger aroused suspicion and was liable to lead to interrogations by the local police.

In 1945, people from the Basra branch founded three additional branches in nearby towns (Nasiriyah, Amara and Qal'at-Salih); shortly afterwards, branches were founded in central Iraq as well (Kut, Hilla, Ramadi, Ana and others). The Jewish communities in these places were small, the branches had few members, and the activity was sporadic. Things were different in the northern branches, where there were significant Jewish communities and vigorous Zionist activity, and the local Jewish population and community leaders were more receptive and interested.

The desire to work with the Kurdish Jews of northern Iraq was not new; it had been part of the emissaries' job since 1942. Sereni had already noted the 'positive traits' of these Jews from the socialist-Zionist perspective: they were healthy, strong and proud, and many of them were farmers or artisans. He was especially enthusiastic about the all-Jewish village of Sandor, a 'Jewish autonomous republic', where the residents worked their own land and defended it with arms, the women walked around freely without veils, and the people spoke Hebrew and had a strong desire to live in Palestine.[76]

The rural Jews of Kurdistan resembled the labour-movement emissaries' image of the ideal immigrant much more closely than the urban Babylonian Jews did (see chapter 2). Although they did not share the ideological belief in 'the value of labour', they lived this value by being 'natural labourers' and therefore the emissaries assumed that they would be able to integrate much better in rural settlements in Palestine than the Babylonian Jews. But as time went on, the Kurdish Jews became less and less important in the emissaries' plans and activities. The emissaries preferred to work in Baghdad, the main Jewish centre in Iraq, and the movement was too small, weak and preoccupied with fundamental problems to devote energy to founding new branches and seeing that they functioned properly. The difficulty of reaching the north and the danger of spending time there also affected priorities. Aliyah was a troublesome topic, too: the Jews of Kurdistan insisted on travelling to Palestine with their entire families and objected to sending unmarried young people. Given the conditions of clandestine aliyah during and after World War II, what they wanted was impossible, and as long as there was no Zionist

activity in the Kurdish localities, there were no rebellious pioneers there suited for clandestine aliyah.

Formal Zionist activity began in the northern branches in 1945, first in Kirkuk and a year later in Mosul, Irbil, Suleimaniya, Khanaqin and elsewhere. Gideon Golani, a member of Hehalutz, was in charge of this activity. He spent many months in the north, touring villages, organizing and offering guidance. By early 1948 there were more than 300 members in the north.[77]

The Zionist movement was highly regarded by the Kurdish Jews and their leaders. Visiting emissaries were greeted warmly and enthusiastically, with expressions of profound messianic fervour regarding the Land of Israel. 'The entire Jewish environment there is sympathetic to our movement… We met with the head of the community (of Meqorot [Kirkuk]) and the end-of-seminar party even took place in his home.'[78] The emissaries' delight was expressed in their correspondence:

> The Jews here are stronger, more nationalistic and religious, and even the Zionist sentiment is better developed. Furthermore, fear does not dominate them as it does in the south. Good youngsters, gifted with faith, enthusiasm, and fitness to act. Also more independent, and this is manifested wherever you turn… Not only the members of the movement but the families, too, look forward to being able to move to Palestine.[79]

They were particularly impressed with the town of Irbil. Yerahmiel Asa went to the region dressed as a rabbinical emissary from Palestine and was received with religious veneration by the community leaders, who mistook him for a sage from Jerusalem. Asa reported:

> The Jews here are a special type of people: they walk tall, maintain their dignity, are connected to Judaism and Zionism with every fiber of their being, and are proud that dozens and even hundreds of families from their town moved to Palestine decades ago. Some of them speak Hebrew. My visit became a voyage of honor and veneration for the Land of Israel. Their attitude towards me and their attachment to the Land of Israel simply thrilled me. They, too, are ours—our work has good prospects![80]

The circumstances of Asa's visit suggest that the encounter between the Zionists and the Kurdish Jews was marked by an element of deception that bridged the gap between ideologies and religious views and made collaboration possible.

Indeed, Zionist activity in Kurdistan was unique in terms of the close, full cooperation with the community leaders and with the families of Hehalutz members, unlike in Baghdad and Basra. The families opened up their homes to the members, let them hold regular Hebrew classes and lectures, hosted local and district seminars for counsellors, and saw to the participants' needs. They even let Hehalutz people modify the educational system, opening new schools or reorganizing the existing ones. Hillel reported: 'We didn't pass up the opportunity; we introduced major revisions and improvements, and there's no need to describe at length how valuable this is… We can teach Hebrew there freely. And not only Hebrew…'[81] In fact, the community leaders let the Zionist

movement play an active role in community life and in the administration of community affairs, and even welcomed this. They saw no ideological, religious or political conflict between this process and the interests of their communities. On the contrary, the initiatives of the local young people were welcomed, because they improved education without doing harm to local tradition or challenging the local leadership.

The supportive attitude of the community leaders and the general Jewish population in the north can be explained chiefly by the geopolitical and social characteristics of Kurdistan, a high, mountainous region that is very difficult to cross. Because the region was cut off from the governmental centre in Baghdad, local Kurdish culture could be preserved and a society with its own tradition, customs, language and way of life was able to develop. Furthermore, there was a Kurdish national movement in the region that sought independence, and the Jews of Kurdistan, too, maintained their own ways of life and customs, their language (Aramaic mixed with Hebrew and Arabic words) and their culture. The nationalism and local anti-establishment activity, manifested in frequent revolts, exerted an influence on the Jews of the region. The Jews were aware of the existence of a separate Jewish entity, and their leaders, unlike the leadership of Baghdad Jewry did not share the patriotic dream of building the Iraqi state.[82]

These geopolitical conditions shaped the cultural and spiritual image of Kurdish Jewry. Modernization penetrated there very slowly, and its effects were felt only slightly. The local Jews remained religious, traditional and conservative, less educated and less assimilated, than those in other parts of the country. In addition, the religious and mystical attachment to the Land of Israel and the belief in a messianic redemption were stronger in Kurdistan.

In this context, the Zionist movement's willingness to devote some of its energy and budgets to activity in the northern branches made it possible to channel the dormant feelings of the local youth into regular, vibrant Zionist activity. As Shlomo Hillel pointed out in comparing the movement's achievements in the north and in Baghdad:

> Serious development, both quantitative and qualitative, can for now be found only in the northern branches. First, because the human material there is much better than the average here and is bound to Judaism and Zion with every fiber of its being, and second, because we have focused a lot of work there in the past year.[83]

In extolling the Kurdish youth, Hillel alluded to the image of the young Jews in Baghdad ('the average here'), youngsters who were more westernized and educated, but also 'assimilated' and detached from Judaism and Zionism. This assessment is interesting because Iraqi society considered the Kurds inferior to the southerners, and especially inferior to the residents of the big cities. The Hehalutz members in Baghdad disagreed with Hillel. Synthesizing local stereotypes with the emissaries' stereotypes and the influences of Zionist education, they believed that both the youngsters in Baghdad and those in the north were the cream of the Iraqi Zionist movement.[84]

The 'advantage' of Kurdish Jewry as perceived by the Mossad emissaries came with an intrinsic drawback: the traditional character of the community made it difficult to establish a modern organizational framework and to instil the attitudes of modern Zionism, and especially socialist Zionism. Therefore, Zionism had only limited success in

the north: new branches were founded and drew a total of about three hundred members, the Zionist movement exerted an influence on the schools and on the study of Hebrew, and social and cultural activities were held. But at this point these successes were merely the products of an initial wave of enthusiasm. The organizational infrastructure was still in its infancy and had not yet had to prove itself, the cadre of counsellors was not yet fully developed, and the activities had taken place for only a short time, not long enough to establish firmly the status of the Zionist organization. The enthusiasm did not guarantee that the movement would be able to survive times of mundane work and, of course, times of political tension or persecution by the authorities. In late 1947, when tension and fear mounted due to the war in Palestine, the northern branches were the first to suffer. Some closed down and the others (Kirkuk and Irbil) reduced their activity to a minimum. The same was true of other branches in small towns and villages throughout Iraq.

Nevertheless, this activity was of great importance. First of all, it strengthened relations between Iraqi Jewish communities by building a two-way bridge between Baghdad Jewry and the Jews in peripheral cities, small towns and even remote villages. The activity also helped to integrate Jewish society: the annual national conferences, the regional and national seminars, the trips by emissaries working in Baghdad to the other branches and the interaction of boys and girls all increased the social involvement of Iraqi Jewish youth. This helped them to bridge feelings of inferiority and suspicion; feelings of superiority and disdain; social, cultural and economic gaps; and preconceived notions that prevailed among the Jews from different communities, especially those between the Babylonian and Kurdish communities.

Moreover, the movement's impact on the various Jewish communities, though limited in scope, not very deep and merely temporary, was of strategic importance in the long run. The increased communication between communities made Jews throughout Iraq vulnerable to the effects of events in the capital, and as a result the fate of the different communities was intertwined, with Baghdad, of course, playing a leading role. This had major ramifications in the early 1950s.

CONCLUSION

Throughout its years of activity, the Hehalutz movement in Iraq developed dialectically, in a constant struggle between its rising popularity among the Jews and crackdowns by the Iraqi police, between a desire to expand and constraints compelling reduction. This dialectic formed the basis for the movement's institutions and methods of operation. In its early years, Hehalutz enjoyed favourable conditions: political stability, the presence of a substantial number of Jews from Palestine and the presence of many foreigners in Iraq. All these factors facilitated its first steps and helped it in times of crisis. The crises of 1943 and 1944 also fortified it somewhat organizationally and ideologically by forcing it to reduce its numbers, bolster its underground nature, depend on its own institutions and emphasize ideological education. Fortunately for the Zionist movement, the beneficial factors that prevailed during World War II enabled it to recover and even to apply the lessons that it had learned. After the war, when conditions worsened, the Zionist underground was sufficiently well established to survive and even to grow.

The Zionist movement also exerted an influence on non-members: sympathizers used their connections to help, especially in crisis situations. Between 1945 and 1948, the movement—characterized by unshakeable faith in the rightness of its path, confidence that Zionism would ultimately prevail and a strong desire to lead the Jewish community—overcame internal crises and contended with fatigue, disappointment and despair. When the State of Israel was proclaimed in May 1948, the movement was still small (fewer than 2, 000 members throughout Iraq) and was still predominantly active in a small social circle from the middle and lower middle classes. But its contacts with other social circles and peripheral localities, combined with the mystical influence of the nascent State of Israel, all had a major impact when immigration to Israel began.

NOTES

1. Shaul Avigur, minutes of a Histadrut executive committee meeting, 20 June 1945, Labour Movement Archives, Tel Aviv.
2. Ibid.
3. Haganah Archives, 14/19; Yosef Meir, *Me-ever la-midbar: Ha-mahteret ha-halutzit be-Iraq* [Beyond the Desert: The Pioneering Underground in Iraq] (Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defense, 1973), pp. 40–4.
4. Report by the Mossad, 3 September 1941, Haganah Archives, 14/19.
5. Y.Meir, *Me-ever la-midbar*, pp. 62–3.
6. Memo to Mossad, 22 September 1942, CZA, S25/5290.
7. Yoav Gelber, *Nos'ei ha-degel* [Bearers of the Flag] (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi, 1983), p. 52.
8. In contrast, in some countries (e.g., Poland) the Zionist pioneering movement received overt assistance from the authorities with agricultural training and self-defence, albeit for antisemitic reasons.
9. H.Cohen, *Ha-pe'ilut ha-tziyyonit be-Iraq* [Zionist activity in Iraq] (Jerusalem: The Zionist Library and the Hebrew University, 1969), p. 66.
10. Shemariah Guttman, 20 May 1943, Haganah Archives, 14/19.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. From E. [Sereni], 3 May 1943, Haganah Archives, 14/19.
15. Ehud to Nissim [Sereni to Avigur], 25 September 1942, Haganah Archives, 14/19.
16. Ahmad Iraawi, the director-general of the Iraqi police, provided the following assessment: 'There is nothing to indicate that the Jewish Agency's efforts to spread Zionism among the Jews of Baghdad are more than insignificant, and after the sudden departure of Dr Sereni, they seem to have stopped. It may very well be that our information that the Jewish Agency is dissatisfied with the Jews of Baghdad as immigrants is correct.' Kitling Report, 24 January 1944, PRO, FO624/38/502.
17. For example, the son of the Iraqi minister to Saudi Arabia; see letter dated 4 October 1943, Haganah Archives, 14/19.
18. From Golani [Eshel], 31 October 1943, CZA, S25/5289. Before leaving for Iraq, Eshel offered his intelligence services to the Jewish Agency Political Department.
19. From G. [Eshel], 4 October 1943, Haganah Archives, 14/19.
20. Golani to Eldad, Shulamit, and Yosefon [Eshel to Sereni, Ben-Shalom and Dobkin], 26 January 1944, Haganah Archives, 14/20.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid.

23. Golani to Ben-Yehuda, Yosefon and Shulamit [Eshel to Avigur, Dobkin and Ben-Shalom], 1–2 May 1944, CZA, S6/1960; report by Givoni, 20 May 1944, Haganah Archives, 14/20.
24. Golani to Ben-Yehuda, Yosefon and Shulamit, 1–2 May 1944, CZA, S6/1960.
25. The emissaries mention the members' financial status numerous times, especially in the context of funding their aliyah. Sereni noted that the activity was taking place among the lower classes (Haganah Archives, Israel Galili files, pp. 12–13). When people from affluent families were involved, this was stated explicitly, as in the case of Yosef Shem-Tov, 'the son of an important personality in the city' (from E. [Sereni], 20 May 1943, Haganah Archives, 14/19).
26. Golani to Eldad, Shulamit and Yosefon, 26 January 1944, Haganah Archives, 14/20.
27. Golani to Ben-Yehuda, Yosefon and Shulamit, 1–2 May 1944, CZA, S6/1960.
28. Gideon Golani, Rafael Zurani, Mordekhai Bibi and Aliza Biron (Shabtai-Katan) were prominent among them.
29. Golani to Ben-Yehuda, Yosefon and Shulamit, 1–2 May 1944, CZA, S6/1960.
30. According to a letter from Pnini [Givoni], the material was sent with a Jewish driver and was seized as a result of a tip from an informer. See the letter from Pnini, 'To all our well-wishers', 27 June 1944, Haganah Archives, 14/20.
31. See Kitling Report, quoting Iraawi, see n. 16.
32. On the attitude of Iraqi politicians, especially Nuri al-Said, toward Zionism, see ch. 1.
33. From Golani, 26 June 1944, Haganah Archives, 14/20.
34. Golani to Pnini, Ben-Yehuda, Hofshi, Yosefon and Shulamit [Eshel to Givoni, Avigur, Nameri, Dobkin and Ben-Shalom], July 1944, Haganah Archives, 14/20; 'Excerpts from a Letter from Baghdad', 27 October 1944, CZA, S6/1960; to Dr Shulamit [Ben-Shalom], 24 December 1944, CZA, S6/1960. For more information, see Y Meir, *Me-ever la-midbar,* pp. 92–3.
35. Golani to Pnini, Ben-Yehuda, Hofshi, Yosefon and Shulamit, July 1944, Haganah Archives, 14/20.
36. There was a small group of activists in Mosul at the time, but it soon broke up. In contrast, organized activity in Basra began in the summer of 1942 and continued steadily with the help of the soldiers from Palestine.
37. From Golani, 3 December 1944, Haganah Archives, 14/20.
38. In 1945 contributions averaged about 50 Palestine pounds per month and exceeded Hehalutz's monthly budget of only 30 pounds. See M.Bibi, *Ha-mahteret ha-tziyyonit-halutzit be-Iraq* [The Underground Pioneer Zionist Movement in Iraq] (Jerusalem: Hakibbutz Hameuhad, 1988), pp. 578, 632, *passim*.
39. Yehoshua Givoni, report on his mission to Iraq, meeting of the Hakibbutz Hameuhad secretariat, 14–15 October 1945, Hakibbutz Hameuhad Archives, Efal, division 5, container 9, file 5. Of the 1, 200 members in Baghdad, 800 belonged to Hehalutz and 400 belonged to Hehalutz Hatza'ir.
40. For examples, see Bibi, *Ha-mahteret ha-tziyyonit-halutzit,* pp. 610–11, 676–7, 713–21, *passim*.
41. Aliza Biron [Katan], ibid., p. 646.
42. Yoav Biron [Katan], ibid., p. 646.
43. Gideon Golani, ibid., p. 647.
44. Ruhama Sapir, a graduate of Seminar C, ibid., p. 652.
45. Yehudit Bechor, a graduate of Seminar C, ibid., p. 652.
46. Gideon Golani, ibid., pp. 508–9.
47. Givoni, report on his mission to Iraq, Hakibbutz Hameuhad Archives, Efal, division 5, container 9, file 5.
48. On the tensions inside Mapai about political and ideological tendencies in Iraqi Zionism, see ibid., pp. 53–4.
49. Y.Meir, *Me-ever la-midbar,* p. 116.

50. Shamai to the Hehalutz Department, Histadrut executive committee and Hakibbutz Hameuhad secretariat, received 27 May 1947, CZA, S86/322. The letter seems to have been written in late March or early April.
51. Ibid.
52. Shamai to Artzi [Hillel to Mossad], 29 September 1946, Haganah Archives, 14/25.
53. For details, see 'Resolutions of the Fourth Central Committee of the Hehalutz Movement in Jerusalem', Nisan 1947, Haganah Archives, 14/16.
54. Meeting of the coordinating secretariat, 7 October 1947, Efal, division 1b, container 8, file 34.
55. Interview with David Hakham, conducted by Zvi Karagila, 1978, no. 69, pp. 30–1, BJHC.
56. See, Second National Conference, Haganah Archives, 14/20.
57. Pnini to Ben-Yehuda [Givoni to Avigur], 21 March 1945, Haganah Archives, 14/21.
58. Letter from Pnini [Givoni], 20 February 1945, Haganah Archives, 14/21.
59. Ibid. See also a similar description in his letter to Moshe Klieger, in Bibi, *Ha-mahteret ha-tziyyonit-halutzit,* p. 489.
60. Avraham Ben-Yaakov, *Yehudei Bavel* [The Jews of Babylonia] (Jerusalem: Kiryat Sefer, 1979), p. 342.
61. H.Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq: A Study of Iraq's Old Landed and Commercial Classes and of Its Communists and Ba'thists and Free Officers* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978), p. 466.
62. Interview with Shmuel Moriah, p. 11, clandestine aliyah project; Y.Meir, *Me-ever la-midbar,* pp. 107–8.
63. Shamai to Artzi [Hillel to Mossad], 29 September 1946, Haganah Archives, 14/25. In his letter of 23 October 1946, he adds: 'The only hope in Mifratzi [Basra] is to replace the previous staff of counsellors, almost all of whom are unsuitable for the work' (Shamai to Artzi, 14/25).
64. See, for example, 'The Rescue Youth Defense Organization', in Sereni's report of 2 July 1942, Galili files, Haganah Archives; and statements about the emissary from Hashomer Hatza'ir. See n. 63; ch. 3, pp. 59–62; ch. 6, pp. 140–46.
65. Bibi, *Ha-mahteret ha-tziyyonit-halutzit,* p. 612, n. 1.
66. Y[ehoshua Givoni] to M[oshe] K[lieger], 21 June 1945, ibid., p. 629.
67. Y.Meir, *Me-ever la-midbar,* p. 114.
68. Salim [Givoni] to Uri Cohen [Babai-Shefer], 3 June 1945, Haganah Archives, 14/22.
69. Bibi, *Ha-mahteret ha-tziyyonit-halutzit,* 2 December 1944, p. 615.
70. See remarks by Gideon Golani: 'In the Exile I thought that more people from this class than others would move to Palestine, but regrettably I found none of them on the kibbutz.' 'Package of News from Our Movement in the Exile and Our Seed Group in Palestine', no. 4, 11 August 1947, p. 5, Hakibbutz Hameuhad Archives, division 2 foreign, container 1, file 10.
71. Bibi, *Ha-mahteret ha-tziyyonit-halutzit,* p. 615.
72. Ibid., p. 629, n. 4.
73. Resolutions of the central committee, 5 April 1945, Haganah Archives, 14/21.
74. Y.Meir, *Me-ever la-midbar,* p. 123.
75. A budget was obtained in 1946. See Hillel's letters on this subject, 29 July 1946, 2 September 1946, 29 September 1946, Haganah Archives, 14/25.
76. Sereni, 2 July 1942, minutes of a meeting of the Aliyah Bet committee, Israel Galili files, Haganah Archives.
77. For details on the branches, see Y Meir, *Me-ever la-midbar,* pp. 217–21.
78. Shamai to Artzi [Hillel to Mossad], 29 July 1946.
79. Yerahmiel Asa, 'Be-ahat mi-galuyot Yisrael' [In one of the Jewish Exile communities], *Mi-bifnim* 13 (April 1949), p. 634.
80. Ibid., p. 641.

81. Shamai to Hehalutz Department et al., received 27 May 1947, CZA, S86/322; Yerah to kibbutz secretariat et al, 14 April 1947, CZA, S6/1960; Yerahmiel, meeting of the Hakibbutz Hameuhad secretariat, 7 October 1947, Efal, division 1b, container 8, file 34.
82. Asa, 'Be-ahat mi-galuyot Yisrael', p. 643; *Niv*, no. 3.
84. Shamai [Hillel] to Hakibbutz Hameuhad secretariat et al, received 27 May 1947, CZA, S6/1960.
84. Gideon G. to Aliza [Golani to Biron], *Ba-derekh le-hagshama* [newsletter], Allonim, Tevet 1946/47, p. 9, Hakibbutz Hameuhad Archives, division 2 foreign, container 1, file 7.

5
Young Women in the Zionist Movement

About one-third of the members of the Zionist movement in Iraq were women. Participation by women was a fundamental part of the movement, which engaged in intensive ideological and practical activity to equalize their status. This substantial participation of Jewish women warrants an explanation, because it occurred in a Muslim country and in a traditional, conservative society, where the inferior status of women was fundamental to the social hierarchy and the internal balance of powers. To understand this phenomenon we will examine the status of Jewish women before the establishment of the 'Hehalutz' movement and the struggle within the movement for women's integration in Zionist activities.[1]

BACKGROUND: CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN THE STATUS OF JEWISH WOMEN IN IRAQ IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

In the 1940s, Iraqi Jewish society was gradually undergoing modernization, particularly among the upper and middle classes in the cities of Baghdad and Basra, where most of the Jews lived. Nevertheless, Jewish society was an integral part of the predominantly Muslim society: there were many similarities between the majority and minority groups, especially in the societal area.

The extended family was the basic unit of social organization in Arab and Jewish society alike. The family formed the dominant social institution that gave people and groups their religious, political, class and cultural identity. The hierarchy of the patriarchal family was based on age and gender: the young were subordinate to their elders and women were subordinate to men. The family was headed by the father, who had authority and responsibility and therefore expected respect and unquestioning obedience.

This hierarchy made the inferiority of women an integral part of the Arab social structure. The inferiority was manifested in segregation, confinement to personal and family life, and exclusion from public life. The absence of women from public life was anchored in law, economics and society: they were deprived of public and political rights, including the right to vote, to be elected to government institutions and to hold public office.[2] It was not acceptable for women to work outside the home, and when they did it was due to economic necessity and attested to the failure of the head of the family as the breadwinner. Women's work traditionally consisted of service jobs that involved exhausting physical labour, paltry wages and low prestige, particularly cleaning, laundry, sewing or embroidery. Other women were midwives, healers, matchmakers, musicians at festive occasions or wailers on days of mourning.[3] The alternative was prostitution. Those employed were from the lower class, many of them widows, divorcees, or single

women. Their taking a job did not challenge the societal order; it was unavoidable. Within this societal framework, girls were raised to fulfil the destiny imposed on them by society: to marry, serve their husbands, bring children into the world, take care of them and raise them.[4]

In general, these features characterized the status of urban women—Jewish, Christian and Muslim alike—in Iraq of the 1930s. Jewish women, however, were better off than Muslim women, particularly in terms of their marital status: polygamy was much less common among Jews than among Muslims;[5] divorce was also less frequent, perhaps because of the restraining influence of the rabbinical courts or because the divorcing husband had to repay the dowry that he had received.[6]

There was also a difference in the impact of modernization and Westernization, which penetrated Jewish and Christian society in Iraq before their Muslim counterpart. The first Alliance girls' school in Iraq was founded in Baghdad in 1893. In the late 1940s girls accounted for approximately one-third of the 18,000 Jewish pupils in Iraq.[7] Through its educational system, the Alliance sought to modernize Jewish communities in Islamic countries and elsewhere. Educating girls played a central role in this system. Women were responsible for raising their children and were therefore perceived as being able to transmit European values to them, thereby disseminating the values further and planting them firmly in society.

However, the egalitarian messages of girls' education in Alliance schools were not intended to instil full equality, but only to duplicate the values of nineteenth-century bourgeois society in western and central Europe. The girls' teachers were expected to foster 'gentleness, modesty, simplicity, a desire to excel and shine in a way other than the shameful display of jewelry and baubles, a belief in equality between rich and poor', and so on.[8] These traits were supposed to produce educated women who were first and foremost wives and homemakers and would raise a new educated, enlightened generation. Lower-class girls were offered vocational education, particularly courses in sewing and embroidery (which could be done at home), to help them earn a livelihood.

So long as women working for wages were perceived as tarnishing their family's honour and detracting from the status of the breadwinning man, women could not achieve material benefit from their education. Middle-class Jewish families sent their daughters to the modern schools not to improve their financial status, as they did with their sons, but for social prestige. This prestige was financially meaningful in the context of the dowry: because education gave girls social prestige, they were more desirable in the marriage market and had an advantage over uneducated girls. Ironically, the dowry custom, which made girls an economic burden and impaired their status, actually accelerated the process of their education.[9]

In the late 1930s, new occupations—teaching, nursing and clerical work for private firms—began to open up to educated young women from the middle class. In the 1940s some young women from the upper-middle class even acquired higher education and began to work as doctors and pharmacists.[10]

As young Jewish women in Iraq discovered that other societies and cultures offered women more equal lives, they became aware of their inferior status. Although educated women were often admired and shown greater respect within the family, their status remained the same in principle, and it could not change so long as the values of the society in which they lived remained the same. Under these circumstances, the

expectations that the women had picked up along with their knowledge and education were demolished repeatedly by the frustrating reality.

THE ZIONIST PERCEPTION OF THE STATUS OF JEWISH WOMEN IN IRAQ

In the writings of Iraqi Zionists, the Zionist movement is portrayed as having redeemed young Jewish women, freed them from slavery and given them lives of value and equality.[11] Although the Zionists were hostile to the Alliance and ignored the educational and ideological foundation laid by it, the two movements drew their sustenance from a common source—the European Enlightenment. Both advocated progress, aspired to ameliorate Jewish society and sought to forge a new, modern, educated Jew as part of constructing a new society. This common source also produced the ideas about changing the status of women and the importance of mothers in shaping the new face of society.

The Zionist emissaries—almost all of them men—were the driving force behind the fight for women's liberation within the Zionist movement and the campaign to attract young women to the movement. They sought to found a mixed youth movement, following the pattern customary in the Zionist youth movements in Palestine and the Diaspora. Having women as members seemed essential to them, partly because it helped with the social atmosphere and attracted more young men to the movement, and partly because they were unfamiliar with any other pattern of activity

The emissaries also took upon themselves an ideological-cultural mission, just as the Alliance teachers before them had done: they sought to transform their members and forge them anew in the image of kibbutz members. A change in the status of women was perceived as a national mission of paramount importance. Education for equality and women's liberation was intended to give women the ideological and organizational tools needed to undermine the existing arrangement and to struggle to change the face of society. Enzo Sereni phrased the goal as follows:

> The dominion of the family must be broken… Breaking this dominion of the family is one of the educational tasks that our movement should take on, even before any Zionist and Jewish activity. First we have to engage in educational human action, to make them persons…[12]

Finally, the only way to train women for pioneering immigration to Palestine was to persuade them to join the movement. Immigration by women was essential to the success of settlement groups of Iraqi Jews in Palestine; many of these broke up due to the shortage of women.

The struggle for women's equality in the Zionist movement focused on several directions: One concerned Jewish society and consisted of absolute rejection of the attitude toward Jewish women. The second involved encouraging the women in the Zionist movement, bolstering their self-confidence and reinforcing recognition of their rights. The third focused on the men in the movement; it attempted to alter the traditional arrogant system of expectations of women and to teach the young men to regard women as equals, thereby helping the latter acquire self-confidence and to fight for their rights.

The emissaries and the movement members wrote many descriptions of the status and way of life of women, and particularly teenage Jewish girls. These descriptions focus on issues that were relevant to Zionist activity. Enzo Sereni described the situation as follows:

> A girl cannot leave the house without her father; she can't speak or meet with a man outside. Women do not meet with men outside at all. When visitors come to the house, the women and men are separate… When a girl leaves the house, they have to know exactly where she's going, by what route, and for how long—in hours and minutes—she will be gone. If she doesn't go that way, then she is considered to have gone astray. I am in no way exaggerating. This is the lot of the Jewish girl in Baghdad: constant fear.[13]

In his lectures in various forums in Palestine, Sereni told of abuse of women as a social norm.[14]

A similar picture is portrayed in an essay entitled The Lives of Young Women in the Diaspora', written by a young woman from Basra at the end of a counsellors' seminar in Iraq:

> Young women live black lives; they feel as if they are in jail. Their father is their prison warden, their suffering is harsh, all their lives they are degraded, oppressed, and discriminated against. They cannot take a single step without permission. Their father, especially when [he] is conservative, does not let them go up to him and argue with him, and they see him not as a father but as a cruel judge who oppresses them and [curtails] their freedom. Very few young women have any freedom. Some fathers don't even let their daughters have a little education… And when a woman leaves her father's domain, nothing changes. Instead of finding freedom she goes from darkness to degradation. Her husband acts the same way as her father, closes the doors to her and doesn't let her go out. Most people consider girls a heavy burden… That is how young women live. They are bought and sold…[15]

Similar ideas are found in an essay written in Palestine, in which the author stresses the redeeming and liberating role of the Zionist movement:

> The situation of young Jewish women in Iraq before the movement was founded was miserable. Under the influence of the backward environment, the religious conservative family deprived young women of their rights and turned them into slaves and servants who had no right to express an opinion. The Jews were heavily influenced by the Arabs around them, because to them young women were no more than worn-out pieces of furniture that cause constant anguish and must be gotten rid of as fast as possible. Jewish girls waited impatiently for the day they would be freed from the burden of the family, or more precisely, from this enslaving

> environment. In the movement they found a faithful expression of their desires, manifesting the change in values of which they dreamt, and therefore they were swept up with tremendous force, in all the joy of youth, to the ranks of the movement… For them the movement was a device to liberate young women.[16]

The women's descriptions, like those of Sereni and other emissaries, are generalized, superficial, and stereotyped depictions that reflect ideological-cultural arrogance and rejection not only of the status of women but of all aspects of Jewish life in Iraq. They judge Iraqi Jewish society according to western values and the criteria of socialist Zionism and condemn it vehemently. Therefore these descriptions of Jewish society should be regarded as hackneyed, one-dimensional texts that served the Zionist rebellion against the local way of life and culture, as well as against the Jewish Diaspora in general. Their description of 'enslavement' in Iraq and 'redemption' in Palestine was wrong. In both cases the reality was much more complex.

THE STRUGGLE FOR EQUALITY IN THE ZIONIST MOVEMENT

In her book *Gender and Nation*, Nira Yuval-Davis notes two types of attitudes toward women adopted by national liberation movements: one sees women as a symbol of emancipation and modernization and therefore encourages women to take an active part; the other regards women as a symbol of the national culture and tradition that should be preserved, and therefore bars women from formal participation in the struggle.[17] The Zionist movement in Iraq followed the first pattern. Nevertheless, it was unique in that the boundaries of the struggle were set by the emissaries from Palestine—men who represented a different cultural world. These men preached and worked for equality for women as part of the national and cultural message of Zionism. They also urged the young women to express themselves and to write about their problems, feelings and opinions.

Due to the dominant position of the emissaries, the women did not have to fight for their status within the movement. On the contrary, they enjoyed a supportive, encouraging climate. Even the tension between women and men within the movement was latent, limited and restrained, and the struggle was directed outward, towards the home and the family, against the rule of the fathers. As a result, the national and feminist struggles were linked and complementary, unlike in Palestine, where women had to give priority to the national struggle over the feminist one.[18]

As a result of these elements, the socio-economic class of the subjects/objects of the struggle was unique, too. Whereas in western countries the feminist struggle was waged by middle-class women, and in Third World, including Muslim, countries it was waged by the women of the upper or upper-middle class,[19] in this case it was waged by women from the lower-middle class, who usually lack sources of power in traditional societies.

The Activity of Women in the Movement: Scope and Characteristics

Activity in the movement gave women a counter in life against boredom and frustration, as well as knowledge of social, national and other subjects. It fostered assertiveness, since

'the counsellor shouldn't be shy or weak, but a personality; she should serve as a symbol for her group'.[20] The struggle for women's equality was included explicitly in the bylaws of the pioneering movement in Iraq, drafted in 1944. In every course and seminar, at least one lecture was devoted to women's liberation. As a result, feelings of deprivation and a desire to change became conscious and backed by a well-laid-out ideology. Jewish women learned that in other societies, in other places, life was different, more equal, and that changing their situation was possible and dependent on them. Life in kibbutz society in Palestine was portrayed as the epitome of equality; immigration and membership in a kibbutz were portrayed as a way of achieving equality.

Young Jewish women fought for their right to join the movement and to take part in its activities; some also fought against marriages that their parents tried to force on them. This resistance was not new,[21] but the backing of the movement bolstered the women in their rebellion and gave them tools for the struggle.

In addition to contributing to the development of feminist awareness, the movement served as a channel for social and organizational mobility: young women who showed dedication, responsibility and persistence were given the opportunity to be counsellors and to serve on movement committees, under an 'affirmative action' policy instituted by the emissaries. Women attended counsellors' seminars, joined the counselling staff, and played a particularly important role in Hehalutz Hatza'ir, the Zionist organization's youth movement. The Hehalutz Hatza'ir council comprised both genders equally and it was headed by a female teacher, Esther Darwish. Another woman, Aliza Biron, was sent to Basra to help organize the local chapter, and she stayed there for three weeks.[22]

The young women were also represented in the Hehalutz institutions. Of the 7 to 11 members of the council, the executive body which was directly subordinate to the emissaries, one or two were women. Of the 3 to 8 members on each of the various committees (organization, culture, sports, excursion, etc.) one or two were women. These proportions were preserved throughout the period of Zionist activity. Women also played an important role in organizing clandestine immigration to Palestine. They served on the immigration committee, arranged for places for the immigrants to stay before leaving Iraq, took care of coordination between the immigration organizers and the immigrants, and so on. Some of them moved to Palestine in this manner. Very few joined the Hagana, the clandestine military organization. There were only a few of them out of several hundred members, and their role dwindled to providing first aid and helping to move weapons during times of emergency.[23]

The Struggle for the Right to Be Active in the Zionist Movement

Many different factors prompted young women to join the Zionist movement. It was a youth movement and a setting for social activity during leisure hours, particularly for female high-school graduates (aged 17 to 20) who sat at home with nothing to do, waiting to get married. The counsellors came mainly from this group. Later, young women from lower-class neighbourhoods of Baghdad, some of them illiterate, joined. They were attracted by the opportunity for evening studies and an elementary education, as well as by social mobility.[24] Of course, not all the women were consciously motivated by distinctly social factors. Some joined in the wake of brothers, sisters or friends. Once a 'Zionist family' had developed, it was almost taken for granted that girls would follow their brothers to the movement. There were also cases in which the movement provided

solutions for young women fleeing economic or social difficulties, or overwhelming personal or family problems. In such cases the women worked in the movement until they could emigrate to Palestine.

Most of these young women were characterized by initiative and determination, a rebellious and fighting nature, dissatisfaction and a desire to change. One described in her memoirs how the idea matured:

> When I graduated with honors, I wasn't permitted to travel to another city to continue my studies. My brother was allowed [to do] everything. So when I heard that there was a Zionist movement educating boys and girls to immigrate to Palestine, I jumped on the idea in order to be free of the boundaries that my parents had set for

Some women had the full backing of their families; in other cases the struggle arose later, when their activity in the movement clashed with the traditional way of life and social conventions. Activity in the movement entailed a rebellion against the customs of a traditional society that demanded of girls absolute obedience to conservative frameworks. Breaking out of these frameworks affected all areas of life, since mere participation in the movement together with young men could evoke social criticism and ruin a young woman's reputation. It should be noted that the term 'members' used by the movement minimizes the significance of this aspect; society regarded them as young men and women ripe for marriage, and the mingling of the sexes was perceived as a threat to the standard conservative order. Sometimes young women would return home late at night, generally escorted by a young man. Although the escort solved the problem of fear of street hoodlums, it impaired the woman's reputation and harmed her family's reputation.[26] Sometimes the activity involved desecration of the Sabbath. Arguments and debates about this issue were frequent, and they often involved punishments, especially for the young women, who were expected to be more obedient and conformist.[27]

It should also be kept in mind that Zionist activity was illegal; the full significance of the danger was realized only after women were jailed. One was sentenced to two years in jail, which she spent in the central prison in Baghdad together with communist women prisoners.

Zionist women described their struggle for the right to be active in the Zionist movement in numerous essays published in the movement's newsletters in Iraq and Palestine. One wrote:

> [A young woman] would fight hard against her father and brothers; they would spy on her, persecute her. After all, what is this impertinence, going around with young men, endangering herself and her home through activity in a heretical Zionist movement? But to her the movement was a tool for women's liberation.[28]

The most serious point of dispute between the young women and their parents revolved around their demand for permission to emigrate to Palestine. The notion that a young woman who had been bound by a system of rigid social rules, and whose 'honour' had to be preserved as a fundamental determinant of her family's social status, would live far

from the family's supervision and be free to conduct her own life was revolutionary. Moreover, it was clear that many of these women intended to join kibbutzim, which were perceived as an anti-religious society with a permissive, and even licentious, way of life. There were also rumours of discrimination by kibbutz members against the oriental immigrants. All these factors made things very difficult for young people when they asked their parents permission to move to Palestine, and in many cases the parents refused to let their daughters go. This explains the relatively small number of female immigrants.

One young woman described the struggle for the right to go to Palestine as follows:

> What a life we live! In every home there is a war raging between the parents and the daughter. The daughter wants to move to Palestine, to build the land, to live a free life—and the parents object. How long will we wait?[29]

When it came time to go, the separation was not easy:

> It took a tough heart to stand before a begging mother and a father asking for an explanation… I pleaded with them: 'Don't chain me,' let me be free, because a person has to be free. Their distress and anguish didn't stop me… All through my immigration I thought about my family situation, how I was the one making them depressed.[30]

The woman's insight into the role reversal in daughter-parent relations seems to have come only after she emigrated to Palestine. In any case, the relationships reflected by these descriptions are complex and nothing like the stereotype portrayed by the official Zionist line. There is a constant dialogue between family members, which may include arguments based on affection, appreciation and mutual respect between father and daughter. Descriptions of the house as a jail and the father as a jailer are foreign to these relationships.

Despite the obstacles, several hundred young women made their way to Palestine during the 1940s. Usually the parents gave their consent after a son moved there; in other cases the parents themselves had begun to think about moving to Palestine and were therefore more understanding of their daughter's request. As more and more people went to Palestine, it became easier to obtain the family's consent. In many cases, threatening to run away helped soften a father's stance and obtain his consent—and this gives an indication of the status that the daughter had acquired within the family through activity in the movement and as a result of her newfound self-confidence.

One counsellor, Margalit, tells of an argument she had with her father about the importance of emigrating to Palestine and building up the land.

> I remember once arguing with him bitterly until he got angry at me, banged on the table, and said to me loudly: 'I am your father and I know what you can and cannot do. I am intelligent enough and I don't need your advice. You should know that even if the Holy Spirit were to tell you to immigrate to Palestine, I wouldn't let you.'[31]

Shortly afterwards, Margalit left for Palestine.

The national factor, too, had an impact on the family's stance. Following the anti-Jewish pogrom in Baghdad in June 1941, more and more Iraqi Jews felt a national-existential crisis, a sense that the Iraqi nation with whom they lived was rejecting them and that they would ultimately be forced to leave. This feeling made some parents more understanding of their sons' and daughters' desire to move to Palestine. Another factor was the economic crisis, which made middle-class families unable to afford a dowry. For them, as well as lower-class parents, emigration to Palestine was not only a national solution but also a way of resolving their personal crisis. Thus, in the second half of the 1940s, there were young women who joined the movement primarily in order to reach Palestine.

Factors Helping the Women's Struggle

The main factor that made possible the activity of women in the Zionist movement was the relative openness that prevailed among the Jewish middle class, as manifested in the modern education given to girls. In most cases, brothers or male cousins preceded the women in joining the movement; they paved the way and gave their backing to the girls' involvement. However, such assistance could not be taken for granted, because these young men were responsible for preserving the purity and good name of their sisters or other relatives.

Both the emissaries and the women asked the young men to help in the struggle. One counsellor, Esther Darwish, appealed to them from the podium at the second conference of the movement:

> I now take the opportunity at this conference to ask for your help (on behalf of all the female members who are fighting for freedom, dignity, and happiness). In other words, help her lift her heavy yoke, and together we can all break through the wall of the ancient Baghdad tradition that the exile has brought upon us, and together we can all cut the chains that have bound us for 2,000 years.[32]

The woman's call met with a critical, taunting response from one young man:

> Perhaps our girls have no faith in themselves and can't free themselves, or more precisely, *don't want to sacrifice anything*…. Dear girl, we men don't have to come to free you. You have to free yourself; sacrifice something and you'll be an example for others and a pioneer of pioneers.

He then went on to explain, 'We men are also busy liberating ourselves from the yoke of oppressive family tradition and from the yoke of the father's opposition to the son's desire to choose his own path.'[33]

It seems that the young men had difficulty accepting the new, egalitarian value system and internalizing its meanings. Certainly, they had a hard time fighting for it. After all, they were themselves waging an intergeneration struggle for their role in the conservative local society, for their right to forge their own destiny and for their right as Zionists to lead society. Even if they agreed in principle with the feminist struggle, they did not

regard it as their fight. They were willing to help but not to lead it, especially since every feminist accomplishment was liable to harm their privileges in the traditional society.

Another factor working in the women's favour was the consensus in the Jewish community regarding the yearning for Zion. Sometimes no clear distinction was made between the traditional 'love of Zion' and modern Zionism, especially not pioneering, practical Zionism. Parents who would not let their daughters work let them take part in the movement's educational activity, on the assumption that everything related to the Land of Israel was positive and desirable. At least in the early stages of activity, parents often misunderstood its nature and ramifications. They saw that the members were studying Hebrew, the holy tongue, and therefore assumed that it was positive, harmless activity. When they discovered that it involved innovative, revolutionary social ideas and political activity, it was hard to set the clock back. The women had already rebelled.

Jewish mothers also helped. The ambivalent status of women in oriental society was manifested in their attitude toward their daughters' Zionist activity. Although outwardly subordinate to the men in the family, within the home the mother took the place of the father, who was at work or at the neighbourhood cafe most of the day; in practice, she was in charge of family life. In addition to raising her children, the mother also had to be the sentinel, warding off the harmful influence of foreigners and new ideas. It was a dialectical state of affairs in which the mother was supposed to represent the establishment and enforce the male hegemony of which she herself, as a woman, was a victim. In the case of Zionism, however, the same mother who had to prevent her daughter from breaking the rules also protected her from the invasiveness and sanctions of society. The mothers covered up their daughters' activity or minimized its severity and portrayed it as a girlish fancy. Once the daughters had spent some time in the movement and gained experience and self-confidence, they became less dependent on their mothers for help. They learned to fight their own battles.

The mothers' motives were also the result of their ambivalent status. Some helped their daughters because they identified with the national goals of Zionism for religious and spiritual reasons. Sometimes they admired the strong will of their daughters, who had dared to break rules to which they themselves had submitted. And in some cases mothers simply had no choice, aware that if their daughters' activity became known, their reputations would be tarnished and they would have less chance of attaining a suitable marriage.

The leaders of the Zionist movement were well aware of the tightrope walked by the female members. Because women's participation was vital, the leaders were extremely careful about protecting the women's reputations and insisted on perfectly proper behaviour. In the ten years of Zionist activity, not a single case is known of a female member having her reputation soiled. Through such behaviour, the members acquired their parents' trust and eventually even their admiration. This development was part of a broad shift among the Jews in the second half of the 1940s. As the movement grew and embraced more and more families, especially those of the middle class, and as the status of the Jews in Iraq suffered, Jewish society became more understanding and forgiving—and even supportive—of women's participation in Zionist activity. The movement achieved legitimation among the Jewish rank-and-file.

This last factor is related to the national identity crisis of the Jewish community in Iraq in the 1940s. The Jews felt a sense of emergency, as if they were living on a volcano, and

this sense intensified as the establishment of the State of Israel drew near. They thought seriously about their future, and those who suggested alternatives met with mixed reactions. Under the circumstances, as in other national struggles, society was more accepting of women's activity and was even willing to encourage it, so long as it did not go beyond the boundaries of the struggle. Moreover, in underground activity, as in conditions of occupation, women have many operative advantages, particularly in a society with such strict segregation of the sexes. Furthermore, recruiting women for a national struggle does not necessarily undermine the existing social order and does not always bring about a profound social change, especially not in the perceptions of the male segment of society. Often women can even be expected to resume their traditional role after the crisis or struggle is over.

THE GENDER IDENTITY OF THE WOMEN

As we have seen, the struggle for equality was waged within the Zionist movement and the Jewish home, between the public and private domains, and entirely underground, far from the eyes of general Jewish society and the Muslim surroundings. What ramifications did this struggle have, then, for the status of women in Iraqi Jewish society? Should we expect to see the struggle extend to other aspects of Jewish society? In ten years of Zionist activity in Iraq, this did not happen. Outside the movement, in everyday life, young women had no opportunity to implement the new ideas that they acquired in the movement; the average Iraqi Jew was not sufficiently receptive to notions of women's equality, and the changes in the status of women were slow and gradual. Moreover, the status of women in Iraq was determined primarily by Muslim society. Although young women from minority communities— Jews and Christians—could deviate somewhat from the rigid rules of dress, acquire an education and have more personal freedom, their latitude was restricted to the family and the private domain and never extended to the public domain. So long as discrimination against women was anchored in law and social custom, and so long as the surrounding society fostered the discrimination, real change was impossible. In my opinion, the most significant indicator of the status of women was in the realm of work. So long as society objected to letting middle-class women hold jobs, so long as the job options available to women were limited, and so long as women had almost no opportunity to support themselves in a dignified manner and be independent, they were unlikely to fight for a better status.

The result was that in their everyday lives the women in the Zionist movement experienced a dichotomy between two opposing worlds. In the movement they were regarded as equal partners, but when they went home to their families and the surrounding society, they resumed their inferior status, which encouraged helplessness, passivity and resignation. This daily switch between two entities and two cultures gave the young women a double identity: a traditional culture, oriental in its culture and values, on which they had been raised since infancy and a more liberal culture, drawing its ideas from European culture in its socialist-Zionist garb—one passive and aboveboard and the other active and underground; one forced on them and the other a coveted goal.

Again and again, these young women experienced the Cinderella story: by waving a magic wand they became ladies, but a few hours later, when the clock tolled, they

reverted to their inferior status. And in this case, the prince never came. These sharp switches required considerable emotional strength, and many women left the movement and returned to the familiar, clear boundaries set for them by their families and society Those who remained active in the movement battled between the two worlds and their two identities and constantly sought a way out. As one member described the situation, 'I can't go back and I can't go forward.'[34] But they did not have unlimited time; the longer they had been in the movement and therefore the older they were, the more time pressed.

In the end, the education for equality provided by the Zionist movement in Iraq did not lead the young women to expand their struggle for equality; instead, it led to frustration and a dead end, the same frustration that had brought them to Zionism a few years earlier. Although it did not open up new paths in local society, the awareness that it aroused increased their rebelliousness, making it difficult for them to return to their previous course of life.

After several years in the movement, young women faced two options: returning to the conservative, traditional life of a Jewish woman in Iraq, getting married and leaving active life; or choosing a revolutionary path, rebelling against tradition, emigrating to Palestine and joining an Iraqi settlement group on a kibbutz, on the assumption that the egalitarian kibbutz society would solve the problem of the status of the Jewish woman. Until late 1949, this option was chosen by very few—only particularly bold Zionists who chose to shape their own destiny. The others came to the State of Israel shortly afterwards, in the great wave of immigration that brought over almost all of Iraqi Jewry in 1950 and 1951. For all the movement alumnae, both those who chose the conservative path and those who chose the revolutionary path, their membership was the formative experience of their lives, and it created—or at least consolidated and intensified—their awareness of their status as women.

To sum up, the activity of women in the Zionist movement in Iraq must be measured by relative, not absolute, criteria; the main point is not the achievements but the degree of change. Full equality did not exist in any aspect of the Zionist movement, either in Iraq nor in Palestine. But the achievements were exceptional compared to the standard in Iraqi Jewish society and, of course, in Muslim society. But the Zionist movement was not the first organization to show Jewish women the way to awareness and to the struggle for equality. The Alliance preceded it, and its accomplishments formed an essential foundation. The Zionist movement was important in that it gave this trend a big push and provided it with ideological and organizational backing. Furthermore, the women in the movement were part of a new elite that took part in shaping the destiny of Iraqi Jewry at one of the central crossroads in its history, and this elite served as a model for emulation.

NOTES

1. The Zionist sources for this chapter include reports and surveys by emissaries; minutes of movement meetings; correspondence between female members in Iraq and their friends who had moved to kibbutzim in Palestine; personal letters to and from family members who remained in Iraq; newsletters published in Iraq and Palestine; and minutes and correspondence of the Babylonian Liaison Bureau, which operated in Palestine in the 1940s and maintained information about the situation in Iraq. They also include the memoirs of a few movement alumnae, written several decades after they immigrated to Israel, as well as

interviews conducted in the 1990s in which alumnae discuss their memories and assessments based on retrospection.

2. The status of women in Iraq began to change only in 1959, after the monarchy was overthrown, when a few changes were made to the laws of personal status, including the restriction on polygamy. The amendments met with strong opposition. On this subject, see Phebe Marr, *The Modern History of Iraq* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1985), p. 172. In any case, these changes were not due to a struggle by women but part of a general reform initiated by the new regime. In contrast, in Egypt women struggled actively for their rights both as part of the campaign for independence after World War I and later, when they discovered that national liberation had not led to the emancipation of women. On this subject, see Margot Badran, 'Dual Liberation: Feminism and Nationalism in Egypt, 1870s–1925', *Feminist Issues* 8, no. 1 (spring 1988), pp. 27–9.
3. Shaul Sehayik, 'Changes in the Status of Urban Jewish Women in Iraq since the End of the Nineteenth Century', *Pe'amim* 36 (1988), p. 77 (Hebrew).
4. See Rabbi Yosef Hayyim, *The Laws of Women* (Baghdad: 1906; Israel: Otzar Hamizrah, 1979) (Hebrew). See also Yitzhak Avishur, *The Jewish Wedding in Baghdad and Its Filiations* (Haifa: Haifa University, 1990) (Hebrew). On parallels in Muslim society, see Halim Barakat, 'The Arab Family and the Challenge of Social Transformation', in Elizabeth Warnock Fernea (ed.), *Women and the Family in the Middle-East: New Voices of Change* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1985), pp. 27–48.
5. In the 1940s, 8% of married men in Baghdad had more than one wife. In the 1970s this figure was down to 2%. See Barakat, 'The Arab Family', p. 42.
6. Today divorces in Iraq must take place in a court. See Barakat, 'The Arab Family', p. 43.
7. Hayyim J.Cohen, *The Jews in the Middle Eastern Countries* (Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 1972), p. 115 (Hebrew).
8. 'The Alliance's Instructions to Its Teacher', in Rodrigue, p. 87. The traits of educated women are discussed in 'Regina's Wedding', ibid., pp. 91–3. On vocational education for poor girls, see Yosef Meir, *Socio-Cultural Development of Iraqi Jews since 1830* (Tel Aviv: Naharayim, 1989), pp. 223–7 (Hebrew).
9. See the remarks of Simcha (Cohen) Kadoorie at the 14th conference of Hakibbutz Hameuhad, Hakibbutz Hameuhad Archives, division 4, container 8, file 4, p. 173. In the 1940s some girls attended Arab high schools.
10. Among the emigrants from Iraq to Palestine were approximately 60 women with an academic education: 12 attorneys, 17 doctors, 9 pharmacists and 20 teachers. Those who worked were doctors and teachers. See H.J.Cohen, 'University Education among Iraqi-Born Jews', *Journal of Jewish Studies*, (June 1969).
11. Enzo Sereni, 'The First Time Local Young Jewish Women Heard of a New Life', in 'Report from Ehud' (3 February 1943), CZA, S25/5289 (Hebrew). Regarding Iraqi Jewry, one emissary said, 'We saw one of our main tasks as being to build a movement that has female members. We knew that if we couldn't do this, we wouldn't break the wall' (4 April 1943), in M.Bibi, *Ha-mahteret ha-tziyyonit-halutzit be-Iraq* [The Underground Pioneer Zionist Movement in Iraq] (Jerusalem: Makibbutz Hameuhad, 1988), p. 194 (Hebrew).
12. Minutes of the Histadrut Executive (31 March 1943), p. 4, Labor Movement Archive, Tel Aviv (Hebrew).
13. Meeting of the Aliya Bet Committee (2 July 1942), Galili Archive, in the Hagana Archives, file 8 (Hebrew). Sereni gave a lot of attention to the problems of women in Iraq and referred to them in many of his reports. *Inter alia*, he told at length of a woman who went insane after being forced to marry an old man.
14. For Sereni's lectures about women, see the minutes of the Histadrut Executive (31 March 1943), p. 4; minutes of the Aliya Bet Committee (2 July 1942), Hagana Archives, file 8 (Hebrew); minutes of the Jewish Agency Executive (4 April 1943), CZA (Hebrew). See also Sereni's report to the Jewish Agency (3 February 1943), CZA, S25/5289.

15. 'The Lives of Young Women in the Exile', by Shulamit (Moriah), *Derech Hehalutz* [The Way of the Pioneer] 5 (March 1946), BJHC Archives (Hebrew).
16. Shoshana S., printed in the newsletter of the Iraqi settlement group at Maoz Hayyim (19 October 1950), Hakibbutz Hameuhad Archives, division 2, container 3, file 4.
17. Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation* (London: Sage, 1997), p. 103.
18. This is the subject of Deborah Bernstein's book *The Struggle for Equality: Women Workers in the Palestine 'Yishuv'* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuhad, 1987) (Hebrew).
19. Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation,* pp. 119–20.
20. Sigalit (Chechek), *Derech Hehalutz* 1 (1945), in Bibi, *Ha-mahteret ha-tziyyonit-halutzit,* p. 655.
21. Sereni, meeting of the Aliya Bet Committee (2 July 1942), Galili Archive, in the Hagana Archives, file 8 (Hebrew).
22. Y. (Yehoshua Givoni) to M.K. (Moshe Klieger) (3 February 1945), in Bibi, *Ha-mahteret ha-tziyyonit-halutzit,* p. 456.
23. On the activity of young women in the Hagana, see Y.Meir, *Me-ever la-midbar: Ha-mahteret ha-halutzit be-Iraq* [Beyond the Desert: The Pioneering Underground in Iraq] (Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defence, 1973), p. 116.
24. One female counsellor gives the following description: 'The girls in my second group had not learned anything. They didn't know how to hold a pen. Despite this difficulty, I had a lot of success with them. For two months now, they have known how to read and write like others. If I say just one word to these girls, they will bring many poor, uneducated, working girls from the ghetto to our movement.' *Derech Hehalutz* 2 (1945), in Bibi, *Ha-mahteret ha-tziyyonit-halutzit,* p. 650.
25. Kashi, 'From Iraq to Israel', MS, p. 14.
26. The emissary Yehoshua Givoni notes in his report on the second conference of the movement (3 December 1944): 'The time is 11 p.m. The plan was to finish at 10. A few girls were given a hard time at home about 'such a long wedding'. In Bibi, *Ha-mahteret ha-tziyyonit-halutzit,* p. 417, the counsellor Esther Darwish recounts that her parents objected to her activity and warned that no man might want to marry her and her sisters 'because our honor was defiled'. Esther found a way to evade arguments: whenever she was forbidden to go out for an activity, she would go from the roof of her house to the roof of the house next-door and from there to the movement. See Haviva Ivri, 'Women in the Pioneering Underground in Baghdad' (Be'eri, MS, 1971), pp. 20–1, 23 (Hebrew). The remark is from an interview.
27. Shulamit Ginosar describes how one Friday night her father refused to open the door to her and left her outside in the dark, scared and crying, for what seemed to her an eternity. Interview no. 222 (20 June 1995), BJHC Archives.
28. Shoshana S. (Somekh), 'Jewish Girls in Iraq', in a newsletter marking the completion of training programme of the Iraqi settlement group at kibbutz Maoz Hayyim (19 October 1950), Hakibbutz Hameuhad Archives, division 2, container 3, file 4 (Hebrew).
29. Evelyn (Aviva Salton-Zilka, Basra), *Derech Hehalutz* 1 (1945), p. 12, BJHC Archives. See also Zivya B. (Gershon), 'The war at home with the parents is hard. This war at home requires patience and wisdom.' *Derech Hehalutz 2* (1945), pp. 10–11, BJHC Archives.
30. *Mehayenu* [From Our Lives], the newsletter of the Babylonian Youth Society, kibbutz Gelil Yam (1 June 1946) (Hebrew).
31. Margalit (Cohen), 'Letter to Babylonia', kibbutz *Gesher* (March 1945), p. 9 (Hebrew).
32. 'Young Women in the Movement', in Bibi, *Ha-mahteret ha-tziyyonit-halutzit,* p. 405.
33. Yehoshafat (Yosef Meir), *Derech Hehalutz,* 5 (1946). Emphasis in original.
34. Bibi, *Ha-mahteret ha-tziyyonit-halutzit,* p. 622.

6
The Zionist Struggle for the Jewish Street

RELATIONS BETWEEN THE ZIONIST MOVEMENT AND THE COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

Even at low points and in times of crisis, despite constant fear of the Iraqi authorities, British advisors and the community establishment, Hehalutz always considered itself an alternative leadership for the Iraqi Jewish community. The dilemma between its pretensions and reality was expressed nicely by one of the counsellors, Yoav Biron:

> We pioneers have an unlimited mission; fate has given us responsibility for a stubborn Jewish community fighting unwittingly against its survival. And as we have accepted this precious deposit, we must hold on to it to the end, irrespective of the cost and sacrifice involved.[1]

On the operative level, the emissaries sought to develop connections with prominent members of the Jewish community, especially its leaders, in order to obtain their support for the Zionist idea and their assistance in hard times. But this was no simple matter.

The Zionist movement was founded in Iraq without the consent, or even the knowledge, of the community leadership. The first emissaries depicted the community president, Rabbi Sasson Kadoorie, as a dangerous enemy of the movement who was persecuting it and wanted to liquidate it on behalf of the authorities. There was no solid factual basis for these fears. We know of no organized action carried out against the movement by the community president or anyone else in the community administration. Nevertheless, we can assume that word of the Zionist activity reached the community leaders. As representatives of Solel Boneh and the Yishuv establishment, Sereni and Eshel were well-known personalities, even if their role in Zionist activity in Baghdad was not clear. Yosef el-Kabir, a well-known attorney and public figure, and one of the most prominent community leaders, knew of the presence of the illegal emissaries and even met with Guttman and Kadoorie a few times.[2] The Zionist activity of the soldiers from Palestine—their ties with Baghdad Jewry and the Hebrew classes that they taught—could not remain hidden from the community leaders either. They were aware of clandestine aliyah, too, but this did not worry them, as Meir Shilon explained in recounting a conversation he had with Senator Ezra Daniel in 1945:

> The Senator knew about the emissaries from Palestine and about their illegal aliyah activity. At the end of his remarks he said, 'Each of us works in his own way You are taking Jews to Palestine, but how many can you take? Hundreds or perhaps thousands. But that doesn't solve the problem here of the natural increase of the Jewish population, and especially the problem of the poor and impoverished. I am continuing my activity on behalf of the community and will keep it up until the end of my life.'[3]

Presumably, Rabbi Kadoorie also knew about the Zionist activity. David Sala (Salman) told Shilon that the rabbi was aware of the Hebrew classes and about the smuggling of Jews to Palestine, and added that he had not been given any further information so that he would not be involved in matters that could jeopardize his status and hurt the community.[4] But the community leaders were not aware of the extent of the activity and, most importantly, they did not know what the Haganah was doing. It seems that they did not want to know either. Moreover, they did not regard the small, weak Iraqi Zionist movement as a threat to their hegemony in the community or as competition. Their main problem was how to keep the Iraqi Jewish community going, while preserving its political, economic and social positions despite the political vicissitudes that threatened its welfare: the rise of the national movement, which was rife with antisemitism, and the escalation of the Jewish-Arab conflict in Palestine. Although the leaders lost their pro-Iraqi orientation as a result of the xenophobic and antisemitic nationalism that developed in Iraq, they could not and did not want to adopt the Zionist solution, partly because they did not believe it could succeed[5] and partly because they were deeply ensconced in Iraqi political, economic and social life and did not want to leave their homes and give up their cultural heritage. Under these circumstances, they might have been expected to fight against Zionism, but they did not do so because of the traditional love for Zion and Jerusalem among Iraqi Jewry. The Iraqi Jews did not distinguish between Zionist activity and love for Zion, and a show of hostility toward Zionism would probably have cast doubt on the legitimacy of the Jewish leadership in the eyes of the local Jews. The leaders chose to maintain the image of a loyal, apolitical religious community that dealt discreetly with problems that arose.[6]

This stance precluded direct contact between the leaders of the Zionist movement and the community leadership. Indirect contacts took place in times of crisis with people on the fringes of the community leadership, including Shalom Darwish, an attorney and the community secretary; David Sala, a member of the community's education committee; and Victoria Nissim, Rabbi Kadoorie's daughter. We know very little about these contacts, but we do know that their main purpose was to convey information and coordinate stances.

Hence, even if the community leadership knew of the existence of underground Zionist activity, it could not have known the details of the activity and the extent of its influence. Moreover, the leaders were not concerned about the movement because they thought its influence was limited to the fringes of the community and therefore did not consider it a rival or a threat to their status. Because the Zionist movement was active mainly among young people from the lower middle class, the community leaders did not think it would be able to go beyond this segment of society In any case, they considered Zionism preferable to communism, which was much more dangerous, and to some extent it acted as a curb on communism among the Jews. In retrospect, it turns out that the oligarchic, conservative Jewish leadership did not perceive the depth of the changes occurring in the Iraqi Jewish community at the time. The leaders seem not to have realized the significance of the political power of Zionism as a national movement and failed to appreciate correctly the social impetus behind Zionist activity. It did not occur to them that the disgruntled youth in the lower middle class who made their way to the Zionist movement could pose a threat to their leadership.

Below we discuss the evolution of the Zionist movement's relationship with the community leadership during the period preceding the establishment of the State of Israel by surveying several incidents that led to contacts and clashes between the community leadership and the Zionist movement.

THE CRISIS OF THE LETTERS, OR THE 'SECOND CRISIS'

The 'Crisis of the Letters' began in the summer of 1944, when the Iraqi authorities seized letters and other material written by Hehalutz members. The police made several arrests, and the Yishuv emissaries were worried about a collapse.

The Jewish street became jittery and frightened. 'The people are in turmoil,' the Zionist emissary Yehoshua Givoni reported to the Mossad two weeks after the affair broke.

> The talk of the day among the Jews in homes and cafes. A few families from the city of R [Ramadi, where the material was seized] have left the city for the capital for fear of riots… Rumors have spread in abundance, each one more imaginative than the next. Imagination has stretched all the way to cannons, letters to England, Germany, and so on.[7]

The members' parents were seized with anxiety. Until this incident they had not objected to their children's Zionist activity. They certainly had not objected to their studying Hebrew and hearing lectures about Palestine, despite the breach of traditional practices and customs that it involved. But now young people, including girls, were disappearing from their homes and going into hiding, no one would tell their parents where they were, and the police had begun searching homes and detaining suspects. The parents, and perhaps even the members themselves, realized that Zionist activity was much more dangerous than they had thought. 'This time,' wrote Eshel, 'they felt that belonging to the movement could cause extreme unpleasantness, especially for the home. Everyone knows about the interrogations by the secret police, family members being taken to the police, beatings, and so on.'[8] The parents told the interrogators that they knew nothing about the activity of a Zionist organization and that they had no idea where their children were—and both claims were true. For some time afterwards they refused to permit meetings to be held in their homes.

Meanwhile, Eshel asked Yosef el-Kabir to represent the Zionists if they were prosecuted. El-Kabir agreed, on condition that he be permitted to conduct a demonstrative political trial against the British, the local police and others. Eshel refused. He wanted the defence to obfuscate evidence, downplay the seriousness of the evidence and prevent exposure of the movement to the government and the general public. He refused to sacrifice Hehalutz for the sake of a demonstrative denunciation of the Iraqi authorities. His perspective was a Zionist one, and improvement of the condition of Iraqi Jewry, which was unlikely anyway was not his main concern. In the end, 'the conversation reached the point at which el-Kabir suggested to Golani [Eshel] that he get an Arab attorney'.[9] It turned out that the Zionists had very little in common with el-Kabir, the disillusioned Iraqi patriot. El-Kabir was still living the trauma of the British betrayal

of their Jewish allies and was looking for a means of revenge. The Zionists, meanwhile, were already busy with practical steps, and these were more important than any demonstrative act.

Next, the Zionist movement asked the official community leadership to intercede to put an end to the interrogations and, especially, to the tortures. It was clear that if the torture continued, the detainees would break and inform on their comrades. The commotion in the Jewish street, the emissaries' demand and the danger to the entire community forced the community dignitaries to take a stand. 'The community leadership held a meeting,' reported Yehoshua Givoni.

> Our demand, which was supported by only one member of the executive, was that the chief rabbi go to the Interior Minister and demand that he put an end to the whole business. The community decided not to intervene; in its opinion, this was not a general-Jewish matter at all, but a political-Zionist one.[10]

It seems that the leaders were not eager to take on this thankless task and pull the chestnuts out of the fire for the Zionist movement.

In a report written in August 1944, Eshel bitterly attacked the community establishment:

> A few remarks about the fortitude of the Jews here. Their official institutions and figures appeared in all their splendor: fear, helplessness, irresponsibility toward the people. Tremendous efforts were made to budge the supreme secular institution of the community from its passivity and denial. But there was only one achievement: the secular committee [i.e., the secular council] held a meeting about our matter. I say 'achievement' because it was not easy to find one of the seven committee members who would be willing to appear at the meeting on our behalf, and I imagine that the man was constantly apologizing. The meeting ended with no decision. Everyone stressed that it was very important to speak to the Interior Minister, everyone gave reasons why he himself could not do it.[11]

Eshel's viewpoint shows a strong belief in the rightness of the Zionist path and an expectation that every Jew, no matter who, should help. It also reveals an assumption that the Jewish community institutions in Iraq had immeasurable political power and influence. It would seem that only the weakness and fears of the emissaries can explain this assumption. Aryeh Eshel, who handled the contacts, expressed his disappointment to two members of the community executive:

> In Palestine they know about the incident; the people there are expecting your active help; your decision makes things very difficult; you are only part of the nation and you will need the Jewish Agency's help more than once; they will remember that you abandoned Zionist Jews to police persecution.[12]

In the end, however, despite the complaints and allegations, the emissaries did receive assistance from community dignitaries, although not through official channels. A few of the dignitaries exerted all their influence on the police interrogators and spent their money to lessen the severity of the interrogations and to alleviate their brutality Eshel had a 'Zionist explanation' for this:

> They are not Zionists—but when Israel is in trouble there are community dignitaries who will lend a hand. It became clear to them that we are a force that cannot be abandoned or dismissed and that taking our existence into account is essential. They realized that harsh persecution of us would be harmful to the Jews in general.[13]

The emissaries also had help from one of the British advisors in the Interior Ministry, a man by the name of Grace, who worked to attain several objectives: to stop the publication of news concerning the affair, thereby preventing antisemitic incitement among the Arabs and panic among the Jews; to ensure fair treatment of the prisoners; and to portray the incident as a youthful escapade that should not be taken too seriously

The Zionist movement did not sit around twiddling its thumbs either. It successfully hid the people who were wanted by the police. The police even failed to capture the writers of the letters and the printers of the booklets. Eshel understood the fury of the Iraqi security services: 'Anyway it's hard to complain about the police, who are searching for people who smuggled letters and illegal booklets by underground channels in wartime.'[14] In the end, the investigation did not exceed legal bounds, the people questioned were subjected to less pressure than had been expected, and within a few weeks the affair died down.

When it was over, the Zionists realized that what had saved the movement, and even enabled Zionist activity to continue, was corruption in the Iraqi bureaucracy the stature of the British advisors and the extreme resourcefulness of the people in the Zionist movement. The willingness of Iraqi officials, rich and poor alike, to leak information, obfuscate evidence and free detainees in exchange for money had thwarted police efforts. British pressure prevented the Iraqi police from using the evidence in its possession to lay collective blame on the Jewish community and fan antisemitic incitement. Moreover, both the British and the leaders of the Iraqi government were committed to the welfare of the Jewish community. They considered it a quiet, loyal community and wanted to avoid anti-Jewish incitement that might evolve into an anti-colonial campaign. The desire to prevent disaster is what ultimately guided everyone who helped to whitewash the incident, even those who had a distinct interest in acting against Zionism in Iraq.

The incident inevitably evoked the fundamental question of the Zionist leadership's moral responsibility for the consequences of Zionist activity in Iraq. Undeniably, Zionist activity entailed a risk and exposure of the underground was liable to harm the entire community and perhaps even act as a spark that would ignite the incited masses and bring calamity upon the Jews. This issue is related to the broader problem of Yishuv-Diaspora relations and Zionist priorities. Which was more important: protecting the lives and property of the Iraqi Jews or winning them over to Zionism?

Back in Palestine in late July, Yehoshua Givoni met with Eliahu Elath (Epstein) and Eliahu Sasson of the Jewish Agency Political Department to discuss the affair. The

subject was also brought up in a meeting of the Political Department and the handling of the affair was reviewed. But the discussions were confined to operative aspects—greater secrecy, censorship of letters, use of code names, and so on—and totally ignored the fundamental problems.[15] The minutes of meetings in the national institutions give no indication that these problems were discussed either. It should be kept in mind that awareness of impending danger to the Jews of Arab countries, especially Iraq, was one of the factors that had led the Yishuv to initiate Zionist activity there, although the immediate reason for sending emissaries was the quest for immigrants. To the Zionist leadership in Palestine, these two factors were complementary, as is evident from remarks made by Ben-Gurion. Ben-Gurion believed that the Jews of Islamic countries were in danger, mainly because of the conflict in Palestine, and that their situation would deteriorate further. As early as April or May 1943, he had warned: 'The Arabs could slaughter the Jews of Iraq. And if such a thing happens, they will be our victims—because of us.'[16] He concluded that, for this very reason, the Zionist movement had to make the Jews aware of the danger and win them over to Zionism, aliyah and rural settlement in Palestine. In other words, the danger facing them reinforced his opinion that only Zionism would solve the Jewish problem and that Zionist activity in Islamic countries was vital in order to direct them to Palestine. If there was any contradiction here, Ben-Gurion did not see it, and this perception explains why no discussion of the principles involved in the affair was possible. It should be noted that Ben-Gurion knew all about the incident in Baghdad and took a strong interest in what was happening.[17]

THE VISIT OF THE ANGLO-AMERICAN COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY

Another incident that brought the leadership of the Jewish community in contact with the Zionist movement was the visit, in March 1946, of the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry on the Palestine question. This was the first attempt by the Zionist movement to intervene in affairs of the Jewish community and to dictate Zionist positions to the Jewish leadership.

The committee arrived in Iraq to view the situation of the local Jewish community and to look into claims that the community was being persecuted and wished to emigrate to Palestine. In order to bolster these claims, Hehalutz activists sent memoranda to the committee members about the condition of the community.[18] They then pressured the community president to refuse to appear before the committee.

Just before the committee arrived in Iraq, Shilon received instructions:

> Ben-Kedem [Moshe Sharett (Shertok)] asked me to tell you to inform the Jews around you that they should not appear before the committee of inquiry. They should not succumb to pressure; they should not rock the boat.[19] It would be best if they stayed at home in this matter.[20]

These instructions were a diplomatic message from the Political Department, sent to the community leaders via the emissaries. The department believed that refusal to testify before the committee would be understood as a protest against the situation of Iraqi

Jewry. It is not clear why the department thought the community leaders would obey the instructions. Nevertheless, the emissaries decided to carry out a demonstrative act with the help of Hehalutz members. According to Meir Shilon, the idea had been suggested by the members and adopted by the emissaries:

> We agents of Palestine here did not even think of involving the movement here in this whole affair. But on Saturday night, a member of the movement in a position of responsibility brought up the possibility of causing ferment among the Jews on that day, Purim day.[21]

It is hard to accept this explanation, given what we know of the emissaries' authoritative status. More likely, they thought this method would have a greater chance of success than conveying the Zionist message directly. By involving the local young people, they could demonstrate the movement's growing influence and address the emissaries' personal frustration at being so far away from the military activities of the Zionist underground movements in Palestine; they could also respond to the members' increasing activism in view of the failure to develop aliyah routes. The decision may also have been a reaction to the resumption of Lehi activity in Iraq, which at the time was attracting some Hehalutz members.

Thus, in the middle of the Purim service in the synagogue, several young people turned to the community president, Rabbi Sasson Kadoorie, and demanded that he not appear before the committee. In particular, they insisted, he must not testify that the situation of Iraqi Jewry was good. The next day, a leaflet was distributed in synagogues calling on people to prevent the rabbi from testifying. The leaflet read:

> Cursed be the man who betrays his people and depicts our lives here in hues of lies and falsehood in order to save his skin… We won't let him go and lie, we will prevent him from going, we will gather in his doorway and he will not pass.[22]

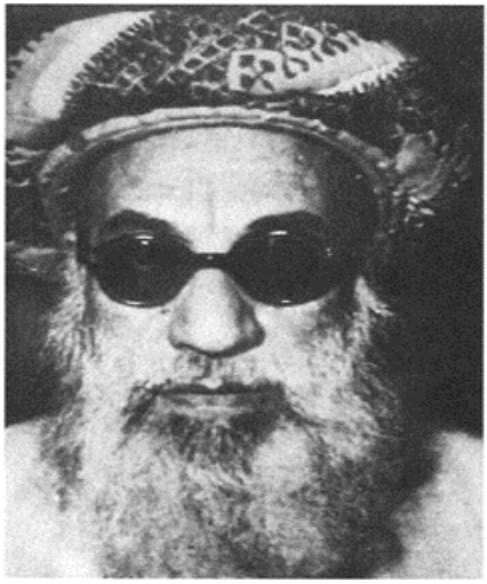
The Jews were shocked by the boldness of the young Hehalutz members, but they did nothing to oppose them and apparently had no objection to their demand.

It is hard to know what effect this campaign had on Rabbi Kadoorie. In any case, in his testimony before the committee he alluded to various forms of discrimination and especially noted the ban on travel to Palestine. He vehemently refused to express a position on the Palestine question, claiming that he did not involve himself in politics, and he gave the impression that he was afraid to state his true opinion in public.[23] A different kind of testimony was given by Abraham el-Kabir, director- general of the Finance Ministry and one of the most prominent leaders of the community. In a memo to the committee, el-Kabir expressed the traditional positions of the Jewish leadership, noting that the Jews of Iraq suffered no discrimination and that their rights were protected by the constitution.

1. An alley in the Jewish Quarter in Baghdad.

2. King Faisal I.

3. The Jewish senator, Menahem Daniel.



4. Rabbi Sasson Kadoorie, the president of the Jewish community.

5. The famous lawyer, Yosef el-Kabir.

6. Abraham el-Kabir, the director-general of the Treasury.

7. Enzo Sereni, the founder of the ‘Hehalutz’ movement in Iraq.

8. The family of Rahamim Sehayek. The first emissaries lived in the family house.

9. Some members of the ‘Hehalutz’ movement in Basra, 1943.

10. A bicycle excursion in Baghdad.

11. Members of the Aliyah Committee in Basra, 1950.

12. Zionist activists (from left to right): the emissaries, Shmuel Moriya and Shlomo Hillel, and the wireless operator, Eliyahu Shani.

13. Zionist emissaries in Iraq, 1950. Standing (from left to right): Naim Bekhor, Yerahmiel Asa. Yoav Goral.

Kneeling: Mordechai Ben Porat and Rafael Zurani.

> The Jews in Iraq do not feel that they have a problem which must be solved through outside assistance. Their domestic problems, if such exist, must be solved through mutual understanding and cooperation. They do not feel any need to emigrate to Palestine, to America, or to any other country, and if there are exceptions, they are the results of commercial, religious, or other reasons… The Jews in this country are living prosperous and happy lives.[24]

The attempt by the Hehalutz movement in Iraq to influence the Anglo-American Committee was just one element of extensive Zionist activity worldwide, most of which was focused on the displaced-person camps in Germany For the first time, the Iraqi Hehalutz movement had taken part in a pan-Zionist effort, and the experience bolstered the members' sense of belonging and pride. It was also the first time in which the movement had called on the Jewish community to act on behalf of a common goal, even though it did not officially and openly back its own initiative. Its success suggested new courses of action, in an attempt to expand the movement's sphere of influence to encompass the entire Jewish community.

INVOLVEMENT IN THE COMMUNITY EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

The issue of Zionist involvement in the Jewish schools came up in April 1947, during preparations for a meeting of the Hehalutz central committee. According to Yerahmiel Asa, 'One of the serious questions that come up in the movement from time to time is the question of how to make our influence reach the Jews.'[25] Hillel explained:

> Until now the movement has stayed away from the community here completely, never distributing any informational material, and all in all the movement has made no attempt to influence public opinion in the Jewish street. Various members have protested against this recently.[26]

These ideas came up as a result of the sympathetic response by the local Jews to the Zionist initiative regarding Rabbi Kadoorie's testimony and the success of Hehalutz among the Jewish communities in the north, especially in the schools. This success showed the movement that the more it dared, the more it achieved, and that teaching in schools could give it ample opportunity to spread Zionist education and ideology. The low pay and poor social status of teachers in Iraq were expected to help them get Hehalutz counsellors into the schools, especially the elementary schools, which had even hired high-school graduates with no formal training as teachers. This policy was manifested in resolutions by the fourth Hehalutz central committee in April 1947:

> The central committee sees a need to stress the importance of creating a Jewish environment sympathetic to our movement… The central committee assigns the secretariat and the editorial committee the job of handling the publication of appropriate informational material for the Jewish community… The central committee considers one method of operation to be putting movement members, and especially counsellors, into the schools as teachers and organizing teachers in special groups.[27]

These resolutions symbolized the start of a new era in the history of Hehalutz: a campaign for Jewish public opinion, combined with defiance of the community leadership. The community leadership was aware of what was happening and had worked hard at countering similar attempts in previous years.[28] According to David Sala, secretary of the Jewish schools committee in Baghdad, one such attempt had been made in 1944, but the community leaders managed to persuade the representative of the Jewish Agency Political Department that it was liable to be detrimental to the community. Now the movement seemed to have more self-confidence and to be willing to confront the community establishment. The establishment did all it could to stop Hehalutz, both by preventing the hiring of known Zionists as teachers and by banning Zionist activity by school teachers. One Hehalutz member wrote:

> The community executive is opposed to Zionist work among the Jews, and the Jews themselves are not interested in it. Furthermore, the government supervision is very serious. The schools are under the supervision of the schools committee of the Jewish community in Tel Aviv [Baghdad], all of whose members are anti-Zionist.[29]

Hehalutz had little to show for its efforts in 1948: only about 30 of the 400 teachers in Baghdad were members or supporters of the Zionist movement.[30] Nevertheless, Zionism was on the upswing. Israeli independence introduced a new factor into the Zionist movement's relationship with the leadership of the Iraqi Jewish community. It triggered great enthusiasm and messianic hopes among the Jewish masses. 'Most of the Jews viewed it as a spark of the redemption,' wrote one counsellor.[31] This awakening complicated the leaders' struggle against the Zionist movement, boosted the movement's self-confidence and aided the spread of Zionist influence. Hehalutz began to print weekly briefs taken from Haganah broadcasts and to circulate them among the Jewish community.[32] Although a Zionist fundraising campaign announced at the time was not very successful, since the Jews were not eager to express anything more than solidarity, there was a noticeable increase in the movement's strength and influence, due to its achievements within the community as well as the tremendous confidence that Israeli independence gave it.

The members were aware of Hehalutz's organizational ability, were dizzied by the establishment of the State of Israel and the resultant messianic atmosphere, and viewed these developments as confirmation of the rightness of their path. More than ever, they were convinced that the Zionist movement should be leading the community. As Yerahmiel Asa wrote, 'It is the sole organized force in this Jewish community, and hence

it bears responsibility for the fate of the Jews.'[33] From now on, the desire to lead the community became an overt and central objective of the Hehalutz members.

ZIONISM AND COMMUNISM

After World War II, the Communist Party—the Zionist movement's main rival in the Jewish street—began to exert more and more of a pull. The Iraqi Communist Party was founded in 1934 by young people from the middle class,[34] but it had very little influence at first. After being reorganized in 1941, it grew progressively stronger for most of the decade under the leadership of Yusuf Salman (1901–1949), better known as Fahd. Fahd was a Chaldean Christian who had gone to Moscow in the mid-1930s and received ideological and organizational training to lead the Iraqi Communist Party. He headed the party until he was executed in February 1949.

The Communist Party and the Zionist movement in Iraq were similar in many ways: both operated underground; both started with small power bases and gradually grew into countrywide movements with headquarters in Baghdad and branches in various towns; both were political movements with a socialist ideology; and both had a modern organizational structure as a result of non-Iraqi influences. In addition, both were highly alert to political, social and economic developments in Iraq in the 1940s; the Communist Party was frequently involved in these affairs, while the Zionist movement followed them with interest and anxiety, concerned that they could lead to a crisis and perhaps anti-Jewish riots. Moreover, both movements were competing for the same target population within the Jewish community: youngsters from the middle and lower middle classes with a high-school or higher education and political awareness.

Despite these similarities, there was a fundamental difference between the Communist Party and the Zionist movement. The communists drew their strength from social, economic and political conflicts, the unjust distribution of wealth and the increasing polarization between rich and poor. They sought to replace the political and social regime in Iraq with a socialist regime that would correct economic distortions. Zionism, on the other hand, focused solely on the Jewish problem and proposed emigration to Palestine as the solution. The socialist ideals that were a main theme in Hehalutz applied to Palestine only

The difference between the political objectives of the two movements influenced the division between the supporters of communism and Zionism in the Jewish street. Although many people went back and forth between the two and sometimes one's affiliation was influenced by either coincidence or family-related factors (for example, following siblings or friends into one of the movements), the Jewish communists tended to be more affluent and better educated, from the middle class and in favour of integration in Iraqi society whereas their less affluent and also less integrated co-religionists, including some from the lower class, joined the Zionist movement. The former continued to regard Iraq as their homeland and believed that socialism would solve the Jewish problem in Iraq. The latter viewed emigration from Iraq to Israel as the sole solution.

As stated, vigorous activity by both movements began in 1941/42 and continued throughout the 1940s. Even the very first Mossad emissaries were concerned about

communist activity in Iraq, which took place almost openly from the time the USSR joined the Allied war effort until early 1947. The emissaries were afraid that the Communist Party would captivate the Jewish youth. According to Sereni:

> There are already some who say that there is no need for Palestine, that everything will work out locally at the end of the war with the victory of Communism. Enlightening informational activity will be needed in this regard to show the rightness of our path and the socialist value of our Zionist solution.[35]

Meir Shilon reported that Jews played an important role in the Communist Party in Baghdad: although they were not among the leadership, they were 'dynamic material in the party'. Shilon noted that all the Jewish journalists were leftists and that many of the Jewish pupils in Jewish and non-Jewish schools were communists.[36]

Systematic, brutal persecution of the communists began in Iraq in late 1946, after the failure of Prime Minister Tawfiq al-Suwaydi's political reforms, the rise of a far-right government and, most importantly, communist demonstrations in June 1946. Many were jailed, including Fahd (in January 1947) and other party leaders.

The persecution of the communists made Jewish youngsters less eager to join their ranks, weakened the party and eliminated concern that they might take over the Jewish street. Furthermore, the Zionist movement was already sufficiently well established by this point and was no longer worried about the strength of the communists. Nevertheless, the persecution did affect the movement: families, aware that the authorities made no distinction between Zionism and communism, refused to allow Zionist activity in their homes.[37] They were afraid that the persecution of the communists would lead the secret police (CID) to Zionist activists. The Hehalutz members themselves shared this fear, and many were deterred from further involvement. 'If the people considered Zionism a necessity of life here,' Hillel explained, 'they might try to overcome the fear.'[38] Hehalutz Hatza'ir had a particularly high drop-out rate, as many youngsters who had only recently joined quit.

Street riots against the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty in early 1948 evoked fear among the Zionists that the communist-inspired agitation would upset prevailing conditions and lead to attacks on the Jews.[39] In late 1948, and especially in 1949, when Nuri al-Said returned as prime minister, the communists were persecuted mercilessly. Members of the party central committee were jailed, hundreds of party members were arrested and severely tortured and the underground press was silenced. Some communists fled to Iran and many others left the party. The collapse was the outcome of a betrayal: a party member had informed on the party staff.[40] On 14 and 15 February 1949, after two years in jail, the party leaders, including Fahd, were executed. It was a heavy blow to the party, which seemed to have reached the end of its road. These developments affected the Jewish community, too: the Zionist movement's main rival had been weakened and Hehalutz was now the only potential opposition to the traditional community leadership.

THE STRUGGLE AGAINST THE REVISIONISTS

As far as we know, revisionist activity in Iraq comprised two organizations: the Community of Free Jews, an organization that was founded by local people, was active in 1942 and 1943, and had 300 members; and a branch of Lehi, founded in 1945, which had approximately 80 members that year.[41]

A few of the young Iraqis who moved to Palestine joined revisionist organizations—Betar, the IZL, or Lehi—and then returned to Iraq, whether for personal reasons or as emissaries of their organizations. These people, who included Salim Hiyawi, Menashe Haik and Albert Shamash, founded and led the revisionist groups in Iraq. Lehi also sent two non-Iraqi emissaries: David Blau and Dr Avraham Gershuni. Activity in both organizations involved studying Hebrew, singing Betar songs, learning revisionist ideology, acquiring arms and ammunition and receiving weapons training. The Lehi branch was also supposed to help with anti-British activity in Iraq.

The Mossad emissaries were aware of the two organizations and were very concerned. The emissaries explained their objection to the revisionist activity on ideological, organizational and security grounds. In Palestine the labour movement and the revisionists were divided by an ideological chasm, but the emissaries assumed that in far-off Iraq they would have a hard time explaining the differences between the two ideologies:

> It's hard to conduct informational activity among the members about the essence of Revisionism, because most of the people are not yet ready to take in such explanations. On the other hand, without this it's hard to explain to our members the difference between our activity and the activity of the others, since at several points there are some similarities between them.[42]

The Mossad emissaries felt that the Iraqi Jews would be more receptive to the revisionist message than to the national-socialist message of the labour movement. The revisionist threat was perceived as a serious one. Moreover, the underground revisionist organizations in Palestine, labelled the 'separatists', were embroiled in a bitter—and even violent—conflict with the labour movement. The revisionists were perceived as domestic rivals and opponents, and hostility to them and to their activity was taken for granted. Moreover, the IZL and Lehi did not recognize the national institutions, did not accept the authority of the Jewish Agency Executive, and were not involved in the institutions that had formulated the principles for sending emissaries to Islamic countries and devised the Uniform Pioneer Plan. Because they were outside the 'organized Yishuv' camp, the struggle against the separatists was self-evident, but the catch was that little could be done to stop them. Because they did not recognize the authority of the national institutions, it was hard to exert pressure on the revisionists in Palestine to cease their activity in Iraq. The situation with Lehi was even more complicated and dangerous. Albert Shamash, the leading Lehi activist in Iraq, was a former assistant to the aliyah emissary Aryeh Abramovsky. After helping the Zionist movement in the crisis of the

summer of 1944, he was wanted by the Iraqi police and had been smuggled to Palestine. His return to Iraq was perceived as a real risk for Hehalutz, which was afraid that searches for a Lehi man from Palestine would lead the secret police to the Mossad emissaries. Their worries were compounded by the timing: Lord Moyne had only recently been assassinated in Egypt, and the secret police '[did] not distinguish between a disciple of A.D.Gordon and a disciple of Avraham Yair'.[43] The emissaries asked the Mossad to prevent his return, but to no avail. It seems that Shamash was also aware of the risk of being in Baghdad; he therefore introduced Blau to several local young people and rushed back to Palestine after two weeks.[44]

Furthermore, Lehi activity was a threat to the achievements of Hehalutz and its status in the Jewish community. 'The movement is in a tough spot. The Lehi man is striving to attract some of our people,' reported Meir Shilon.[45] Meir Abd al-Nabi, who had been involved (together with Shamash) in forging passports and was even a member of the Iraqi Haganah, quickly joined the Lehi group.[46] Despite all their efforts, the Mossad emissaries were unable to prevent people from dropping out of Hehalutz and joining Lehi. Instead of the quiet, dull Hebrew studies and education for pioneering values, and even the new Haganah defence organization (beginning in the summer of 1945; see chapter 8), Lehi offered more exciting activity that appealed to hotheaded, rebellious youngsters: an active struggle against the British, including terrorism, extortion, acquisition of weapons and training in the use of firearms. David Blau's aggressive, commanding personality may also have had an effect. The Mossad emissaries were also worried about the planned missions of Lehi members. Blau intended to rob a bank, and Gershuni was supposed to devise a plan to blow up the British embassy and the oil facilities in Kirkuk. The emissaries knew that Hehalutz had not been a high-priority target for police investigations only because it posed no threat to the government. A change in the nature of Zionist activity—and the Iraqi secret police did not distinguish between the two underground movements—could jeopardize Mossad activity in Iraq.

But there was little that Hehalutz could do against the revisionists in Iraq. The emissaries confined themselves to verbal methods: by means of persuasion and threats they attempted to influence the members of the revisionist groups to quit or, alternatively, to join Hehalutz, as members of the Community of Free Jews had done three years before. Quite likely the confrontation with Lehi in Baghdad made Hehalutz more activist, as it proved to be when the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry came to visit. In 1949, when the emissaries discovered that former Lehi members wanted to move to Palestine, they added about thirty of them to a clandestine aliyah transport travelling via Amara to Iran. Although the transport was captured, Lehi members continued to be given preference in aliyah. Shortly thereafter, they were put on other transports.

THE STRUGGLE AGAINST HASHOMER HATZA'IR

Concurrently with their struggle against Lehi, the emissaries also clashed with Hashomer Hatza'ir for hegemony over the pioneering Zionist movement in Iraq. The conflict began in mid-April 1945, when the Hashomer Hatza'ir emissary Yisrael Hertz, known as 'Kurt' (or 'Kurdi' in the emissaries' letters), came to Baghdad without the consent of the Mossad.

Back in the spring of 1944, the leadership of Hashomer Hatza'ir had selected Hertz as its emissary to Iraq in coordination with the Mossad. But Hashomer Hatza'ir's rejection of the Uniform Pioneer Plan prevented him from being sent, and even an appeal to Ben-Gurion did not help.[47] Sending Hertz to Iraq was an attempt to establish facts on the ground. In a report summing up his mission, Hertz wrote:

> We were left with two choices: to give up or to take the path of confrontation, in an effort to force the Mossad people there to let us work with them. We chose the second path. The instructions that I received were: (a) to make every effort to prove our genuine desire for collegial work in the Histadrut's Hehalutz movement in the east; (b) not to take any step that runs counter to movement unity there without explicit instructions from Palestine.[48]

It should be noted that, in keeping with the Uniform Pioneer Plan, the Hehalutz movement in Iraq was at the time affiliated with the Jewish Agency and not the Histradrut.

The Mossad emissaries were taken totally by surprise and felt extremely insulted:

> The Hashomer Hatza'ir people in the Givati family [the soldiers from Palestine] here, who work together with me, did not disclose anything to us. They made a decision, announced it, and carried it out. We were surprised. For a while there was a little storm. There is no house to be found for Kurdi… All the worry about lodgings, housing, communication, clothing fell upon us suddenly…[49]

The problem of lodging for Hertz was a serious one because the Mossad emissaries themselves did not feel secure in the apartment in which they lived—for this reason they also sought to delay the arrival of the Haganah emissary Dan Ram. But the main problem was political. In a meeting on 17 April 1945, between Hertz, the Mossad emissaries, and two soldier-counsellors, a number of allegations were made against Hertz. Yehoshua Baharav asserted: 'There is a Mossad in Palestine. We are its emissaries. It supports us. It is in charge and bears responsibility for failures. We consult it on everything. Without instructions from it, we will not recognize you.'[50] But Baharav was especially worried about the political significance of Hertz's mission. In a letter to the Mossad, he reported:

> During his very first day he managed to announce that he doesn't need us, is not afraid of the police, and will do his work with or without our consent… Can we expect additional surprises in order to satisfy the wishes of the entire spectrum [of Zionist parties]?[51]

Meir Shilon of Mapai was the most vehemently opposed to Hertz. He threatened to leave, declaring that he was not willing to live 'in party mud'.[52]

The most difficult dilemma was that of Yehoshua Givoni of Hakibbutz Hameuhad. Givoni had been in Iraq for over a year and had made a major contribution to the organizational structure of Hehalutz and to moulding its ideological and educational

image. He understood Hertz and identified with his motivations because they were both members of similar movements that found themselves in opposition to Mapai at the time and felt discriminated against.

> Before leaving for Berman [Iraq], I said in a conversation with Ben-Yehuda [Avigur] regarding Kurdi: 'You are to blame for this: Don't shut the door to pioneering forces, so that they will not be forced to come in through the window.'[53]

Nevertheless, he was very concerned about the security risk posed by Hertz's presence in Baghdad and the repercussions for Hehalutz: the competition, the conflict and perhaps even the predicted factionalization. He warned Hertz:

> Any attempt to set up a second framework will encounter opposition. There's no room for two pioneering and Histadrut movements, differentiated not by ideology but by personal contentiousness. This country, with its conditions, is unique on the map of countries. I suggest to you, Kurdi, and to your friends here that you think very hard, spend a few sleepless nights before deciding to take such a step. The present movement will defend itself. It will not let itself be destroyed. We will not let more than three years of hard work be destroyed. The end result here may be destruction for you and for us—for both movements. Think very hard.[54]

But these were not Givoni's only motives. Even before this meeting, right after Hertz arrived, Givoni and a soldier by the name of Ya'akov Lifshitz had met with him. Hertz informed them that his mission had been agreed upon by the leaders of Hashomer Hatza'ir and Hakibbutz Hameuhad, and that it was merely by chance that no letter about this had been sent to Givoni. Givoni was surprised to hear this, but he had no way of knowing whether Hertz was telling the truth. He wrote to Moshe Klieger, head of the foreign affairs committee of Hakibbutz Hameuhad:

> If everything he says is true, I can only inform you that I am not willing to take orders of this sort… This entire act seems to me to be a major mistake… Even if the discrimination is completely unjust and wrong, this must be avoided due to the severity of the situation here.[55]

Givoni therefore suggested a compromise: they would wait for instructions from Palestine, either from the Mossad or from Hakibbutz Hameuhad, and in the meantime Hertz would work in Basra temporarily and await a decision. Hertz, who categorically refused to return to Palestine, had no choice but to agree to the proposed compromise. Thus the issue of safe lodgings for Hertz was resolved, the political problem was removed from Baghdad for the time being, and the emissaries assumed that they had bought time. 'If we are destined to quarrel, let us postpone the quarrel for another month.'[56] In fact, Givoni thought his compromise would be the permanent solution. He

assumed that Hertz would be approved and that Iraq would be divided between two Zionist movements:

> 'Territorial division'? So be it. If it has been decreed, better that than a highly problematic partnership here [in Baghdad]. Kurdi reiterated that he has no intention of setting up a special framework, but the temptation of separate Hashomer Hatza'ir education is liable to lead to results different from those proclaimed, and then who knows where we will all be?[57]

However, it soon turned out that the compromise had been a mistake. Both the Mossad and Hakibbutz Hameuhad were vehemently opposed. The Mossad, assuming that Hertz would despair in view of the harsh conditions and would agree to leave Iraq, wrote: 'We did not send him, and we weren't even consulted. Therefore, you do not have to make arrangements for him there. If he is now willing to return to Palestine, help him.'[58] Hakibbutz Hameuhad, too, was surprised by the news, and Moshe Klieger expressed his opposition to cooperation with Hertz. According to Klieger, Hashomer Hatza'ir's method of operation everywhere and under all conditions was to set up a separate movement, and because doing this in Baghdad was inconceivable,

> He will try to make this movement—Hehalutz and Hehalutz Hatza'ir—his own. And the branch in Mifratzi [Basra] has even been handed over to him. Neither he nor they have any right to this. It is our moral right to continue to educate this movement… This is the theft of the 'poor man's lamb'.[59]

The motivations of the Mossad and Hakibbutz Hameuhad were political; both were trying to preserve their hegemony in Iraq. But was a 'territorial division' really unworkable? The main problem involved security, and it seems that a solution was actually found to this. Baghdad and Basra were about 500 kilometres apart, and ties between the two branches were weak. However, cooperation was essential for arranging the transport of members from Basra or Iran to Palestine and the transport of written material from Palestine. Such arrangements required goodwill. But Hakibbutz Hameuhad refused to give up potential spheres of influence in Iraq, and the leaders of the Mossad wanted to ensure their control over the emissaries. Both organizations were concerned about setting a precedent that might have repercussions not only in Iraq or the Islamic countries but also in Europe.

When the Mossad emissaries in Iraq found out that Hertz had tricked them and that the Mossad and the leadership of Hakibbutz Hameuhad had not agreed to his mission, they did all they could to get rid of him. On 15 May 1945, Gideon Golani, the most prominent of the counsellors, was sent to Basra to bring Hertz back so that he could be sent back to Palestine. Telegrams sent the following day give an indication of the effects of Hertz's mission. Shilon wrote: 'He is a cheat, a liar, a scoundrel, and a swindler. I will not sit with him here. He came here to destroy us.'[60] In a letter to Klieger, Givoni described the turn of events. It seems that Hertz had refused to return to Baghdad. Golani told the Basra branch council what had happened and asked for its help, but the council backed Hertz. The councillors sent a letter, written by Hertz and signed by them, to the national

secretariat of Hehalutz in Baghdad, declaring their refusal to accept the orders from Palestine, the national secretariat and the emissaries—'for the first time'—on the grounds that they had not been given any justification for sending Hertz back. Givoni demanded that Klieger pressure Hashomer Hatza'ir to tell its emissary to go home. 'You have to stop all conversation, all negotiations with them, unless they immediately stop this action.'[61]

The emissaries then had to bring up the matter with the members of the Hehalutz institutions, whose Zionist education had not included classes on the political nuances of the labour parties in Palestine. If the difference between the labour movement and the revisionists was hard to explain, the problem with Hashomer Hatza'ir was even harder. That day, a delegation made up of a few members of the national secretariat left for Basra together with Shilon and Givoni, hoping to effect Hertz's removal—but they, too, failed. The emissaries discovered that the Hehalutz members in Basra had formed a deep bond with the long-awaited emissary The activists in Basra felt that an unbearably heavy burden had been lifted from their shoulders: the organizational work required a huge investment of time and energy, more than they could devote to it; their knowledge of Hebrew was insufficient; and the Zionist concepts and ideology required more in-depth knowledge than the local counsellors had.[62] Hertz had begun his work in Basra by arranging a seminar for counsellors and reorganizing the existing Zionist institutions by disbanding and then rebuilding them. He organized parties and field trips, encouraged social activity, and even helped with defence work. The Basra branch was united in support of its emissary against the people from Baghdad: 'He's a genius, this guy who has managed in one month to incite a branch against me, against the emissaries, against the national secretariat like this,' wrote Givoni.[63]

Under the circumstances, the institutions in Palestine decided to take action. Hakibbutz Hameuhad was in an extremely delicate position. On the one hand, it was Hashomer Hatza'ir's partner in Ahdut Ha'avoda, in opposition to Mapai. On the other hand, it had to take action against its political ally, in cooperation with its Mapai rivals, even though, on this matter, it agreed with Hashomer Hatza'ir and disagreed with Mapai. Hashomer Hatza'ir demanded that Hakibbutz Hameuhad allow Hertz to remain in Iraq over the Mossad's objections. They think,' wrote Moshe Klieger, 'that everything over there [in Iraq] is in our hands.'[64] But Hakibbutz Hameuhad had no desire to exacerbate its already tense relations with Mapai and refused to enter into a conflict with the Mossad over a matter that was detrimental to its own interests. Moreover, there was a feeling in Hakibbutz Hameuhad that somebody was benefiting from this conflict, as we can see from Klieger's letter: 'I have reason to feel that someone on the 'roof' [the Mossad] is gloating again: They were bumping heads.'[65]

Eventually, after the Histadrut coordinating committee discussed the matter, after it was made clear to Hashomer Hatza'ir that Hakibbutz Hameuhad would under no circumstances cooperate with it, and after Hakibbutz Hameuhad demanded of Avigur 'active intervention and conclusive instructions',[66] Yisrael Hertz received orders from his kibbutz to return home. On 1 July 1945, Yehoshua Baharav reported: 'We have gotten rid of Kurdi.'[67] Hakibbutz Hameuhad had managed to expel its rivals from Hashomer Hatza'ir, but it still had a difficult battle ahead over missions to Iraq. The battle intensified after the establishment of the State of Israel, this time with Mapai as the opponent. Meanwhile, the affair had major repercussions in the Basra branch of

Hehalutz. The bitter arguments and mutual recriminations between emissaries in front of the astonished members of the movement, as well as Hertz's departure, left bad impressions in the Basra branch, added to the tension between the Basra and Baghdad branches, and heightened suspicion. Given this atmosphere, a special emissary was urgently needed in Basra. The branch threatened to split the movement and to appeal to Hashomer Hatza'ir on its own. The emissaries again asked the Mossad to send someone, stressing the impending danger of factionalization—but no emissary came because the dispute over the political affiliation of emissaries to Iraq had limited the number of candidates so much that it was hard even to meet the needs of the headquarters in Baghdad. Even the emissaries themselves doubted whether the institutions in Palestine would agree to the demand.

NOTES

1. Yoav Biron [Katan], from the newsletter *Iggeret la-tenu'a bi-sede ha-hagshama*, no. 2, 1946/47, Hakibbutz Hameuhad Archives, division 2 foreign, container 1, file 7. Others also spoke of a sense of mission. For example, 'The awareness that we have no choice, and that we have been left solely responsible (even if we are weak and alone) for this entire camp known as Babylonian Jewry is what motivated us to do all this' (Gideon Golani, Allonim, 27 December 1946, *Ba-derekh le-hagshama*, 1946/47, Hakibbutz Hameuhad Archives, division 2 foreign, container 1, file 7).
2. Testimony of Ezra Kadoorie, in the possession of Ruth Bondy; testimony of Shemariah Guttman, 5 February 1982, Hakibbutz Hameuhad Archives 25-T, p. 7.
3. A.Twena, *Golim u-ge'ulim* [Exiles and redeemed], vol. 7: *Ha-otonomia shel ha-qehila ha-yehudit be-Baghdad* (The autonomy of the Jewish community in Baghdad) (Ramle: Geoula Synagogue Committee, 1979), p. 219.
4. Ibid., p. 215.
5. For example, el-Kabir told Guttman: You know these bloody British will never give you Palestine. You know you'll have a tough war with the Arabs…' (Guttman's testimony, Hakibbutz Hameuhad Archives, 25-T, p. 10). He told Sereni: You don't know the Arabs; we have to find a place as far away from them as possible. Otherwise there is no solution to the Jewish question' (minutes of a Jewish Agency Executive meeting, 4 April 1943, CZA, p. 8).
6. See H.Cohen, *Ha-pe'ilut ha-tziyyonit be-Iraq* [Zionist activity in Iraq] (Jerusalem: The Zionist Library and The Hebrew University, 1968/69), pp. 157–9. In December 1944 two delegates to the community committee proposed denouncing Zionism, but the community leaders rejected the idea. Golani to Ben-Yehuda et al. [Eshel to Avigur], 3 December 1944, Haganah Archives, 14/20, p. 5. On the leadership's policy regarding Zionism in the 1940s, see Nissim Kazzaz, *Ha-yehudim be-Iraq ba-me'a ha-esrim* [The Jews in Iraq in the Twentieth Century] (Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 1991), pp. 223–37.
7. From Pnini [Yehoshua Givoni], 27 June 1944, Haganah Archives, 14/20.
8. Golani to Pnini et al., July 1944, Haganah Archives, 14/20.
9. Pnini [Givoni], 'Report on the Incident in Baghdad', June-July 1944, Haganah Archives, 14/20.
10. Ibid.
11. Ish Hagolan [Eshel] to David et al., 5 August 1944, Haganah Archives, 14/20.
12. Ibid., p. 4.
13. Pnini [Givoni], 'To all our well-wishers', 27 June 1944, Haganah Archives, 14/20.
14. Ibid.
15. Pnini [Givoni], 'My visit to Jerusalem', 20 July 1944, Haganah Archives, 14/20.
16. D.Ben-Gurion, *Ba-ma'arakha* [In the War] (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1957), vol. 2, p. 234.

17. See interview with Yehezkel Yehuda, no. 602–3, BJHC.
18. See Yosef Meir, *Me-ever la-midbar: Ha-mahteret ha-halutzit be-Iraq* [Beyond the Desert: The Pioneering Underground in Iraq] (Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defense, 1973), pp. 123–8.
19. A paraphrase of Song of Songs 8:4.
20. Gemez to Boaz [Mossad to Shilon], 8 February 1946, Haganah Archives, 14/24.
21. Boaz to Atara, 1 March 1946, CZA, S25/8003.
22. 'To all our Jewish brethren', received 7 April 1946, Haganah Archives, 14/24.
23. Rabbi Kadoorie's testimony was conveyed by Shilon in his letter to Atara, 1 March 1946, CZA, S25/8003. For a transcript, see Asriel Carlebach (ed.), *Va'adat ha-haqira ha-anglo-ameriqanit le-inyenei Eretz Yisrael* [The Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry on Palestine] (Tel Aviv: Leinman, 1946), p. 415.
24. Moche Gat, *The Jewish Exodus from Iraq, 1948–1951* (London: Frank Cass, 1997), p. 29.
25. To the kibbutz secretariat et al., 14 April 1947, CZA, S6/1960.
26. Shamai [Hillel] to Hehalutz Department et al., received 27 May 1947, CZA, S86/322.
27. Haganah Archives, 14/26.
28. Twena, *Golim u-ge'ulim*, vol. 7, p. 199.
29. Report by Gilad, *Niv*, no. 3 (Adar II 1948), Haganah Archives, file 1693.
30. Twena, *Golim u-ge'ulim*, vol. 5: *Ha-hinukh ha-yehudi be-Baghdad* [Jewish education in Baghdad], p. 4.
31. 'Ehud', *Niv*, no. 3 (Adar II 1948), Haganah Archives, file 1693.
32. Ibid., p. 2.
33. Asa, 'Be-ahat mi-galuyot Yisrael' [In one of the Jewish Exile communities], *Mi-bifnim* 13 (April 1949), p. 647.
34. On communism in Iraq, see H.Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq: A Study of Iraq's Old Landed and Commercial Classes and of Its Communists and Ba'thists and Free Officers* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978); Walter Laqueur, *Communism and Nationalism in the Middle East* (New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957); Rony Gabbay, *Communism and Agrarian Reform in Iraq* (London: Croom Helm, 1978).
35. Sereni, 'On the Jews in Iraq', CZA, S6/4575.
36. 'Brief Survey of Iraqi Jewry', n.d., CZA, S25/5289.
37. See report of the sixth meeting of the national secretariat, 6 March 1947, CZA, S6/1960.
38. Shamai [Hillel] to Hehalutz Department et al., received 27 May 1947, CZA, S86/322.
39. Y.Meir, *Me-ever la-midbar*, p. 106.
40. Batatu, *Old Social Classes*, p. 567.
41. Y.Meir, *Me-ever la-midbar*, pp. 45–50, 120–2. There is very little information available on revisionist activity in Iraq. We found no written documentation in the Jabotinsky Archives or in the Lehi Archives. Our information is therefore based on references included in correspondence between the emissaries and the Mossad and on oral documentation by a few of the activists in Iraq.
42. From Ehud [Sereni], 20 April 1943, Haganah Archives, 14/19.
43. Golani to Ben-Yehuda, Hofshi, Yosefon and Giladi [Eshel to Avigur, Nameri, Dobkin and Elath], 3 December 1944, Haganah Archives, 14/20b.
44. See Najib to Yiftah [Dan Ram to Allon], 14 January 1946, Haganah Archives, 14/24.
45. Boaz to Mossad, 13 January 1946, Haganah Archives, 14/167.
46. Najib to Yiftah, 14 January 1946, Haganah Archives, 14/24.
47. See Ben-Gurion's conversation with Avigur and Lipsker, Ben-Gurion Diaries, 28 June 1944, Ben-Gurion Archives, Sede Boqer.
48. 'Report on My Mission to Work with Youth in Iraq in the Histadrut's Uniform Pioneer Framework', n.d., in M. Bibi, *Ha-mahteret ha-tziyyonit-halutzit be-Iraq* [The Underground Pioneer Zionist Movement in Iraq] (Jerusalem: Hakibbutz Hameuhad, 1988), pp. 682–3.

49. Y. to M.K. [Givoni to Moshe Klieger], 24 April 1945, in Bibi, *Ha-mahteret ha-tziyyonit-halutzit,* p. 541.
50. Minutes of the conversation between the Mossad emissaries and Hertz, 17 April 1945, Hakibbutz Hameuhad Archives, division 2 foreign, container 22, file 128.
51. Bin-Nun to H.G. [Baharav to Mossad], 24 April 1945, Haganah Archives, 14/21.
52. Minutes of the conversation between the Mossad emissaries and Hertz, 17 Apil 1945.
53. Ibid.
54. Ibid.
55. Y. to M.K. [Givoni to Moshe Klieger], 24 April 1945, in Bibi, *Ha-mahteret ha-tziyyonit-halutzit,* p. 541.
56. Givoni in the meeting with Hertz, 17 April 1945, Hakibbutz Hameuhad Archives, division 2 foreign, container 22, file 128.
57. Letter to Klieger, 24 April 1945, in Bibi, *Ha-mahteret ha-tziyyonit-halutzit, p.* 541.
58. H.M. to Bin-Nun [Mossad to Baharav], 30 April 1945, Haganah Archives, 14/21.
59. To Y. [Givoni, from Klieger], 29 April 1945, in Bibi, *Ha-mahteret ha-tziyyonit-halutzit,* p. 548.
60. Boaz to Mossad, 16 May 1945, Haganah Archives, 14/22. Baharav also reported: '"Kurdi" is being a nuisance and causing trouble', 16 May 1945, Haganah Archives, 14/22.
61. Y. to M.K., 16 May 1945, in Bibi, *Ha-mahteret ha-tziyyonit-halutzit,* pp. 586–7.
62. Interview with David Hakham, conducted by Zvi Karagila, no. 70, pp. 8–9, BJHC.
63. Y. to M.K., 16 May 1945, in Bibi, *Ha-mahteret ha-tziyyonit-halutzit,* p. 587.
64. Klieger to Givoni, 27 May 1945, in Bibi, *Ha-mahteret ha-tziyyonit-halutzit,* p. 594.
65. Ibid., p. 595.
66. To Y. [Klieger to Givoni], 29 May 1945, in Bibi, *Ha-mahteret ha-tziyyonit-halutzit,* p. 598. Not until 24 May 1945, were the emissaries given explicit instructions to send Hertz back. Carmil, the secretary of the Mossad, explained that this was because they had hoped to persuade Hashomer Hatza'ir in Palestine. Letter from Michael [Carmil], 24 May 1945, Haganah Archives, 14/22a.
67. Bin-Nun [Yehoshua Baharav] to Shmuel [Halpern], 1 July 1945, Haganah Archives, 14/22.

7
Legal and Illegal Aliyah

LEGAL ALIYAH

The Mossad emissaries originally went to Iraq to organize illegal aliyah, but they then discovered that the Jewish Agency Immigration Department was already working on legal aliyah from Iraq. Very soon, they took over this function, assigning the responsibility to Sereni. Their stated reason for this was concern that having more than one Zionist agency involved in Iraq could potentially put the emissaries at risk. But other considerations also seem to have been involved. Legal aliyah could be an alternative to illegal aliyah or an additional option, and it was especially important in times of crisis, in view of the difficulties involved in clandestine aliyah. The right to distribute immigration certificates conferred tremendous power, both because the people who had this right could decide destinies and because the Iraqi Jews viewed them as representatives of the Land of Israel. Of course, the Mossad emissaries preferred to be the sole representatives of Palestine and the only authorities acting in its name. The issue of the selection of candidates for aliyah was equally important. The emissaries thought they should choose candidates based on the values of the labour movement. The Immigration Department, too, saw a great advantage in appointing Sereni to the job: it saved considerable sums of money, as well as the bother and organizational problems of finding and sending a reliable aliyah emissary

Shortly afterwards, Sereni asked to be put in charge of Youth Aliyah, too. While visiting Palestine in early July 1942, he spoke to Henrietta Szold, the director of Youth Aliyah, and asked her to allocate certificates for Iraq. ‘It seems there are no candidates from other countries and they are willing to take youngsters from there,’ he said.[1]

Problems soon cropped up, both with aliyah and with absorption. The youngsters who were interested in Youth Aliyah came from the lower class, and their families could not afford to pay for their studies and their transportation. Furthermore, after they arrived in Palestine it was found that there was a shortage of Arabic-speaking counsellors and that the standard absorption programmes were too secular and permissive for these youngsters.[2] The British and Iraqi authorities also posed obstacles. Instead of stamping passports promptly, the British mission in Baghdad stalled, and the Iraqi government held up exit visas and made departure difficult for those who did obtain visas.[3] By December 1942 it was clear that aliyah was virtually impossible.

The difficulties were the result of a decision by the political echelon in Iraq, which in the mid-1930s was already restricting the emigration of Jews bound for Palestine. The wave of aliyah in the summer of 1941 and the first half of 1942 was made possible by the shock to the Iraqi establishment during and after the pro-Nazi rebellion and was helped by extensive troop movements along the Palestine-Transjordan-Iran axis. In mid-1942, Iraq reinforced its border control and introduced various administrative obstacles to issuing exit permits. Under this policy, Iraq refused to let the ‘Teheran children’ pass

through on their way to Palestine, despite heavy pressure. Moshe Sharett [Shertok], director of the Jewish Agency Political Department, reported: 'It will not, under any circumstances, lend its hand to increasing the number of Jews in Palestine.' Iraq was also unwilling to make a humanitarian gesture to the orphaned children, claiming that 'today's children will be tomorrow's grownups'.[4]

The eagerness of the Iraqi Jews to move to Palestine began to subside in late 1942 due to the economic prosperity and sense of security that had returned to Iraq. Finally, the decision by the British in Palestine to allocate immigration certificates only to European refugees put an end to the possibility of legal aliyah from Iraq.

A few proposals were made during these years to help in bringing to Palestine wealthy Iraqi Jews who had expressed willingness to invest some of their capital there, but the Yishuv institutions disapproved of how they chose to invest their money Sereni mentioned the problem after returning to Palestine:

> Capitalists, and especially capitalists from the eastern Jewish communities, tend not to accept advice and guidance from strangers… Each capitalist is a separate case with individual problems, demands, and difficulties… The truth is that there is not much to offer: these candidates can't even be considered for agriculture. They wouldn't succeed in industry because they lack the talent and adequate technical training. They would almost inevitably turn to commerce as they always have. But nevertheless, we have to take action before it's too late; we will do all we can to the best of our ability.[5]

There is no reason to doubt Sereni's sincerity, but so long as they focused on unproductive or 'speculative' pursuits, the Iraqi Jewish capitalists were perceived as negative and undesirable. Ultimately, the issue of Jewish capital in Islamic countries was not given adequate attention or handled appropriately.

Some of the unused immigration certificates that had been given in 1942 and 1943, remained in the British mission in Baghdad and were used by the emissaries, especially in emergencies. They were given to people who were wanted by the police, older people or children who could not tolerate the conditions of clandestine aliyah, and poor youngsters who could not afford clandestine aliyah. In 1944 these permits were used when other methods were impossible.

After World War II, it became clear that large-scale aliyah with permission from the Iraqi authorities or the Mandatory authorities in Palestine was out of the question. Only a few hundred certificates had been used by Iraqi Jews during the war, and their aliyah was not considered significant quantitatively, politically, or even 'qualitatively', according to the labour-movement criteria. Only a few moved to kibbutzim or Youth Aliyah institutions; most settled in towns.[6]

CLANDESTINE ALIYAH ROUTES DURING WORLD WAR II

As hopes of legal aliyah faded, it seemed that illegal, or clandestine, aliyah would become the dominant means of transporting large numbers of Iraqi Jews to Palestine. The

first illegal immigrants arrived on their own after the Farhud in the summer of 1941, primarily through Transjordan. But when the Mossad emissaries arrived in Iraq, they found that this route was not adequate.

Although the route from Baghdad to Palestine along the oil pipeline was the shortest and quickest, because of the road built there in 1942, it went entirely through the desert, and the only way stations (other than the town of Ramadi west of Baghdad) were army bases. This made it easier for the Iraqi authorities and the British army to tighten their supervision and thwart attempts at aliyah. Another factor working in the authorities' favour was the absence of a Jewish population in the desert region. This migration route required the services of smugglers: Arab drivers, soldiers and British army employees. The high prices that they charged put their services beyond the reach of the members of the Zionist movement, who tended to come from the lower middle class. Moreover, the Mossad emissaries wanted the aliyah process to be entirely in their control, without having to depend on private smugglers. They therefore preferred to go through Syria, where the route was less closely watched, there were Jewish communities along the way and the mountainous topography of northern Iraq might facilitate emigration. This route was part of the Mossad's original plan to establish bases in Syria for smuggling European refugees who were expected to arrive from the USSR and Turkey

The task of establishing a clandestine aliyah route from Iraq to Syria and Lebanon and from there to Palestine was assigned to Monia Mardour in the summer of 1942,[7] but initial attempts failed. As a result, Mardour travelled to Iraq in late 1942 to look into the likelihood of aliyah from there. In his report to the Mossad, he described the obstacles to clandestine aliyah via Syria and analysed various aspects.[8] The document is extremely important because it sheds light on a sphere of activity that was usually handled by aliyah emissaries and smugglers and tended not to be written about. Mardour began his report with his conclusions:

> On our overland routes across tremendous distances in areas with an enemy population, where the roads are under full military and police control, it is essential to set up a ramified network and a thorough, comprehensive arrangement of bases—people and resources—as footholds for action.

He noted that most of the Jewish communities along the way 'are fearful and hesitant about this activity', and only Zionist training would result in assistance. The distance that the immigrants had to cross—1,000–1,500 kilometres—was enormous, most of it was in desert areas, and it was closely guarded for fear of a fifth column, enemy agents and smuggling of goods. All civilian and military traffic in Iraq and Syria was subject to military and police inspection. In addition to patrols and inspections at border crossings and checkpoints, transportation routes were overseen by the French and British military police. Travellers in cars or trains had their papers checked several times; each person's name, address and destination were written down, and any suspicion resulted in imprisonment and interrogation. Communication and transportation were extremely difficult. The secret police listened in on intercity telephone calls, and international calls required military authorization. Transportation conditions were poor, and the prices and timetable were subject to anarchy. Smugglers preferred to take goods rather than people,

since goods took up little space and were very valuable. Large profits could be made from smuggling goods, and the only risk was payment of a fine or at most confiscation of the contraband. In contrast, when smuggling people 'one has to take into account that the "goods" speak and reveal things, and there are potential political complications. The risk of punishment and expected loss are greater. Such a risk is expensive.' Mardour added that this risk, combined with the vast distances, the problem of inspections on the roads and the poor transportation conditions, made aliyah expensive. So long as aliyah proceeded very slowly the price per person was high. Because of all these difficulties, as well as the economic prosperity and political stability in Iraq during the war, clandestine aliyah was slow and on a small scale. For the most part, it was based on soldiers and workers from Palestine, who were recruited to smuggle people instead of 'gold, carpets, sugar, rice, and so on'.[9]

In 1943, attempts were made to develop ties with smugglers and to plan aliyah routes. Most of the immigrants to Palestine in that year, including the Jewish deserters from Anders' Army, arrived with help from the soldiers. Two years after Zionist activity began in Iraq, it still had no achievements to speak of in terms of organizing aliyah. This is reflected in Shaul Avigur's concluding words to the secretariat of the Histadrut executive committee in April 1944:

> After all our efforts, we have not broken open the road to aliyah for the eastern lands. The government is being extraordinarily stingy about issuing the certificates. I'm afraid that there's a danger that aliyah from the eastern lands will be halted; we have to break open a path for this aliyah. We have made attempts so far, but with little success in almost two years of activity, despite the fact that there are no seas separating us and you can almost reach out your hand and be there. But we haven't succeeded, and it is crucial that we put a lot of attention and tremendous resources into achieving the breakthrough.[10]

The change began in the summer of 1944, while Aryeh Abramovsky was the aliyah emissary Abramovsky took advantage of the unused certificates remaining in the British legation in Baghdad. He described this 'legal' aliyah as follows: 'ZThere is no Aliyah Aleph (that is, legal aliyah) from here', he wrote, and what does exist

> is sometimes harder than Bet, but there is a gain of children… The passport is forged. Either I wrote it or somebody else did. The same is true of the exit visa. The certificates are not always in order because children are added to the list and such a combined family could include seven different people. Their journey is illegal. We take them out of the city and from there they continue in a truck. And with a little bribery at the local border stations, it works. Getting into Palestine is the only easy part. Is this what you consider method Aleph?[11]

Another method of getting out was to travel to Syria for tourism, medical, or study purposes. This was an option for middle-class families, who posted a bond to guarantee their return to Iraq, but the Hehalutz members could not afford it, and just applying for a

passport was liable to make them suspect in the eyes of the authorities. The solution was to acquire forged passports, on which dozens of people were sent to Syria and Lebanon and then smuggled into Palestine. The soldiers, too, continued bringing people to Palestine. The emissaries noted that as the pace of aliyah picked up and the number of immigrants increased, the number of aliyah applicants rose, too. 'The increased aliyah from here in recent months has had many effects,' Eshel reported in July of that year, '…and we could bring many hundreds, even today.'[12]

As emigration increased, so did inspections. Several groups—including a family travelling on a forged passport—were caught in the summer of 1944 en route to Syria. These failures halted the use of this aliyah route for a while. When Yehoshua Baharav of Kibbutz Ginossar arrived in Iraq in the summer of 1944, he discovered that the old methods of clandestine aliyah were not working. 'Sick people' were being turned back on the grounds that Iraqi doctors could cure any illness, and in special cases permission was required from a governmental committee of doctors. 'Students' had difficulty obtaining authorization because Iraqi government officials were trying not only to thwart aliyah but also to prevent Jews from obtaining a higher education. The few individuals who managed to leave the country had to post a bond of 500 dinars, and they, of course, were not members of Hehalutz. Leaving the country as a tourist required posting a bond and bribery Meanwhile, the penalty for forging passports was made more severe, and it was questionable whether such passports were still worth using. As crossing the northern border became more and more difficult, the Zionist movement had a harder time finding guides, and those who agreed demanded large sums of money in advance. Aliyah with the help of soldiers became less of an option, too. Baharav summed up in despair: It has become perfectly clear to me that it is immeasurably difficult at present, many times more difficult than in previous years, and it is virtually impossible to use the routes that were used in the past.'[13]

The Mossad tried to reassure him: 'Don't give up hope; the world wasn't created in a day, and in the short time that you've been there a kibbutznik can't turn into a contrabandist and overcome all our enemies by deception.'[14] Shaul Avigur explained to him the principles of clandestine aliyah:

> Long experience has taught us that we should not despair of the previous routes either. And a route that seems completely blocked today may open up tomorrow… You and we have to have infinite patience and take advantage of, seize, and act at every opportune moment.[15]

Avigur was right. In the spring of 1945, the many contacts formed with smugglers in Mosul and Syria began to pay off. A few dozen immigrants were smuggled to Palestine via Syria.[16] In the summer, when the government restrictions were eased and inspections were lessened, several hundred Jews left, most of them on forged passports posing as tourists visiting Syria. For a moment aliyah appeared to be in the clear: it looked as though the routes and methods of operation were secure, huge numbers of immigrants could be accommodated, and aliyah could now be organized among the Jews of Kurdistan and even Iran.

According to the Mossad's figures, it brought between 3,300 and 3,500 Jews to Palestine from the Middle East during the war years (until 1 May 1945), 75 per cent of

them from Syria and the rest (about 850 people) from Iraq, Iran, and Turkey. From April 1942 to April 1943, 643 people were brought to Palestine from these countries; the next year (April 1943–May 1944) there were 1,038; and from May 1944 until 1 May 1945, there were about 1,800. It is hard to estimate how many of these immigrants were from Iraq. Only 140 Iraqi Jews had come via Syria by May 1944,[17] but the number rose considerably in the second half of 1944, and in the first nine months of 1945 'many hundreds' immigrated from Iraq, according to an October 1945 report by Avigur.[18] In mid-1945 the Mossad seemed to have overcome the problem of the desert separating Iraq from Palestine. Four hundred immigrants, including some from Iraq, were now arriving via Syria per month. Avigur could reasonably expect this trend to continue and even to hope it would pick up.

It should be kept in mind that not all of the immigrants arrived with the help of the Mossad; many came on their own. At the time of the November 1948 census, there were approximately 2,000 Iraqi Jews in Israel who had immigrated between 1941 and the end of 1945. Because many immigrants, especially those who came straight after the Farhud, had returned to Iraq; it can be assumed that the number of immigrants from Iraq during this period was close to 2,500: some of whom who came through the Mossad and others who immigrated 'privately'.[19]

POSTWAR ALIYAH

The peak year for aliyah via Syria was 1945, and the overland aliyah routes seemed to be on the verge of bursting. In October 1945, the Mossad predicted 4,000 immigrants via Syria in the next half-year, and the emissaries in Iraq were optimistic, too. But these forecasts proved false. Immigration declined, and 1946 was one of the bleakest years for overland aliyah. Even afterwards, in 1947 and 1948, the Mossad brought only a few hundred immigrants.

We can get an idea of total aliyah from Iraq during those years from the November 1948 Israeli census: 472 residents of Israel at the time of the census had arrived from Iraq in 1945, 210 in 1946 and 567 in 1947, for a total of 1,249 people in three years. A few hundred of them had come with the help of the Mossad; the others came 'privately'. Total Mossad-assisted aliyah from Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and Iran from 1945 to 1947 was approximately 1,500.[20]

Until mid-1946, the soldiers from Palestine played a major role in aliyah by members of the Iraqi Zionist movement. When the last of the soldiers were evacuated in mid-1946, the aliyah organizers had to rely on Arab smugglers—people of dubious character, many of them criminals, who frequently cheated the aliyah organizers and immigrants. In a few cases this led to tragic results.

During the war, clandestine aliyah followed two main routes: The first was from Mosul in northern Iraq to Qamishli, Syria; from there to Aleppo, Damascus or Beirut; and then to Palestine. The second route, through Transjordan, went from Baghdad to Rutba, and from there to Palestine along the road that ran parallel to the Iraqi oil pipeline. The first route was closed off in the autumn of 1945, shortly before Syrian independence, when the Syrian authorities tightened their border control; scores of potential immigrants were stranded in Syrian cities and had to wait weeks to be transported to Palestine. This

transport was delayed and complicated by Syrian-British cooperation in guarding the Palestinian border. David Nameri of the Mossad wrote to the emissaries in November 1945: 'Quite unfortunately, the work has been very weak this month. There is big trouble in Shekhenati [Syria]. Almost all the pipes have become clogged…'[21] A few emissaries in Syria were captured and interrogated, the rest returned to Palestine and others were not dispatched in their place. Within a few months, Mossad activity in Syria was shut down.[22]

The other route, via Transjordan, was the main one used in 1946 and 1947. The emigrants were transported in cars, usually in small groups, and they had to evade rigorous inspections on the road, especially at the pumping stations of the oil pipeline. Some were guided by Bedouin smugglers, taxi drivers, officials in the Transjordanian royal court, or others. Negotiations and arguments over prices went on for months, and the price increased as the number of emigrants rose and options decreased. The Zionist movement was willing to pay 100 dinars or more per emigrant, up from the 15 to 20 dinars that it had cost a few years earlier. Nevertheless, more and more things went wrong: departures were cancelled at the last moment, potential emigrants were abandoned en route, robbed or arrested, and in one case two emigrants were killed in a traffic accident.

Another method for aliyah was the use of forged passports. In late 1946, 100 Iraqi passports were purchased, had fake stamps affixed, and were used to take a few hundred people—families and individuals—to Palestine. This way was a great opportunity for the Zionist movement. The passports were the safest and easiest method of clandestine aliyah, they were used for elderly people, women and children. They were also used to smuggle out people who had to leave in a hurry: aliyah organizers who had been arrested and freed on bail, the people who had posted bail for them, and Zionist activists who had reason to fear arrest. In 1947 and early 1948, a few dozen young people with forged passports immigrated to Palestine on flights to Lod Airport. One hundred more arrived on two flights organized by the Mossad and known as Operation Michaelberg.

Naturally, these methods, apart from the forged passports, were not suitable for every prospective immigrant; they were mainly for strong young people who could withstand the tribulations of the trip. Girls often could not be sent. The high price of aliyah was another obstacle. Although it was decided in early 1945, in consultation with the Mossad,[23] that the national institutions in Palestine would cover part of the cost, the price increase was too much of a financial burden for Hehalutz members. Some were from impoverished families; in other cases parents were opposed to their children's aliyah and could not be expected to pay for it. The emissaries asked the national institutions to increase their financial support. Hillel wrote:

> I know that, thank God, there are fairly rich Jews here who can afford all this aliyah and could even give a lot of support to Palestine. But what can I do? It is precisely these well-off, rich Jews who have no connection with Palestine or with the Jews in general. And as for material that is willing to immigrate, we have to look for it mostly in the ghetto or in the poor villages, especially the villages in the north. Neither of these have financial resources, and they certainly don't have enough. And the issue is crucial. Because large-scale aliyah can come only from people who want

> to immigrate, which means that Palestine will have to help financially, much more than it has done until now.[24]

Meanwhile, the Hehalutz members set up a joint savings fund and let non-members of the movement join aliyah transports in exchange for large sums of money to help fund the aliyah of members.

The hazards and difficulties of the journey the shortage of funds and the demoralization that plagued members in the wake of failures and jailings combined to limit aliyah to Hehalutz members. Reports that Iraqi immigrants were having problems integrating into Yishuv society further reduced the desire to emigrate, as we can see from a letter by Yehoshua Baharav, written in September 1945, when the volume of aliyah was fairly large:

> Very strong complaints are reaching us. Though no doubt exaggerated, they contain a lot of the bitter reality of absorption with which we all are familiar… And you can imagine what a blow this is both in terms of the willingness of the Jews of this country to immigrate and in terms of giving our country a bad reputation.

To Avigur he wrote:

> I ask you to put special emphasis and motivate whoever has to be motivated to ensure more or less normal absorption of the Bermanites [the Iraqis] in our country Because in the flood of Europeans arriving, they may once again become hewers of wood and drawers of water.[25]

These problems and difficulties made special educational activity necessary in order to counter the lack—or at least the minuscule numbers—of aliyah.

The difficulties of aliyah engendered several unusual suggestions: the idea of sending a ship to Basra to take Jews to Eilat (the plan was shelved due to the difficulty of crossing the Gulf of Eilat and disembarking on the shore);[26] a plan to cross the desert on camels; and another plan that was implemented—clandestine aliyah by air, or Operation Michaelberg, which brought two groups of 50 immigrants to Palestine in August and September 1947.[27]

Due to the numerous difficulties involved, each aliyah operation, whether it succeeded or failed, involved extraordinary initiative, risk, daring and a lot of luck. Many tales were told about the heroic exploits of the people involved. Among these operations were an attempt to smuggle 26 Jews with the help of soldiers from Palestine (September 1945); the last-minute cancellation of the departure of 47 prospective immigrants on the eve of the ‘Night of the Bridges’ (17 June 1946, when the bridges between Palestine and neighbouring lands were blown up by the Haganah); the journey of 40 Jews across the desert in trucks, cut short when an accident killed two and wounded several others and the convoy returned to Baghdad (March 1947); a few groups of five or six people who crossed Transjordan, the best known being Roni Mishal’s group, which made its way on foot; a few groups of 8–16 people transported in taxis; the two groups brought by plane; and finally, a convoy of 77 people smuggled to Palestine in a truck in late 1947. In all

these cases, the Iraqi Zionist movement demonstrated impressive organizational ability, both in the planning and implementation of the operations and in dealing with failures. Emergency preparations had to be made, supporters mobilized to help and substantial financial resources allocated.[28]

INTERNAL TENSIONS

The tremendous obstacles to clandestine aliyah from Iraq, the paucity of successes and the many failures, elicited tension and arguments among the various people involved: between the emissaries and the Mossad officials in Palestine who had sent them, between local aliyah activists and the emissaries, and between the aliyah activists and the Hehalutz rank and file in Iraq.

The planning and implementation of aliyah from Iraq required preparation at both ends of the route: in Iraq and at the Palestinian border. The emissaries maintained that the Mossad was downplaying the problems involved, resulting in missed opportunities and failures.[29] The friction between the emissaries and their dispatchers intensified in 1946 and 1947, when aliyah relied on Arab smugglers. Some of these smugglers were residents of Syria and Transjordan who were well known to the Mossad personnel in Palestine. Negotiations with them took place concurrently in Palestine and Iraq, and the smugglers took advantage of the communication and coordination problems between the Mossad and its emissaries. In one case, the sheikhs from the Sha'alan family tricked the aliyah organizers, accepted large sums of money, and did not keep their part of the bargain.[30] In October 1946, in the midst of negotiations with the smugglers, Yehonatan Baharav returned to Palestine to coordinate plans. Baharav complained:

> I would stress that your behavior in this regard—especially in the recent incidents—has long since gone too far and has prompted me to decide to return to my country now… I have tried hard throughout to overcome the local difficulties…which have become gradually worse since the soldiers left. But while this may be understandable with respect to external difficulties, I have no idea how to overcome the obstacles that you are placing in our path;… it is not at all clear to me what the point is of the many statements still being made about clandestine aliyah, the struggle for aliyah, and so on. You have here an excellent opportunity to prove your willingness and your ability to take people at the border and bring them into Palestine surreptitiously or by force.[31]

Even after he returned to Iraq in January 1947, the lack of coordination, flaws in the transmission of messages and other problems continued. The Mossad ignored Baharav's main demand—that it appoint one specific person to handle Iraqi affairs. In response, he sent off a furious letter to Palestine:

> It is with a feeling of bitterness as well as powerful and profound offense, which I will probably not succeed in describing here, that I write this letter, after having basically decided to return to my land because I see no

> point to my being here any longer… You still recall the demands that I made of you when I was in my land, one of the most important of which was that you appoint a specific person to deal with our affairs on your end. To my great astonishment, the matter has still not been rectified. One would think that this is perhaps the main reason for the complications.[32]

In reply to Baharav's bitter complaints, he received pacifying, apologetic letters: 'Your complaints and your anger, though perhaps justified, do not justify the termination of relations,' he was informed in November 1946.[33] In February 1947 he was told: 'We have no other candidate, and don't decide on your own to come back now. Your letter was written at a heated moment, but please forgive us.'[34] In April 1947, after the movement's worst failure yet—the death of two would-be immigrants in an accident—Yehonatan Baharav returned to Palestine and refused to go back to Iraq. Shortly thereafter, in a meeting with Ben-Gurion and Israel Galili, he lambasted Ben-Gurion for allegedly neglecting the Jews of Islamic countries and warned of an impending catastrophe for Iraqi Jewry.[35]

The tension between the emissaries in Iraq and Mossad headquarters in Palestine, as well as the emissaries' distrust of the Mossad, revolved not only around aliyah but also around Hehalutz affairs and routine activity. The problems with the Mossad stemmed not from human error or failure to obey instructions, but from Zionist priorities after World War II, when the entire Zionist establishment was focused on European Jewry and the Mossad was primarily concerned with clandestine aliyah by sea.

The Mossad's apologies show how justified the emissaries' allegations were. We can see from some of the emissaries' other complaints and allegations that they took offence at what they perceived as discrimination against them compared to the Mossad emissaries to Europe; sometimes their complaints reflected frustration, despair and anger over failures of clandestine aliyah. Nothing could be done about the fact that aliyah from Iraq was limited to individuals or small groups. Large-scale aliyah was not feasible at the time. It should be kept in mind that illegal mass migration cannot take place without the overt or covert consent of at least one of the countries involved. Such consent existed in all the countries in which the Mossad was successful. Although Iraq prohibited emigration to Palestine totally, it did not hermetically seal its western border to individuals. This indicates that encouraging Jews to move to Palestine was not perceived as a threat to the government, and therefore no special efforts were made to discover and prevent such activity. Nor were the penalties for those captured en route severe. This policy, along with the inefficiency of the local authorities and their willingness to accept bribes, made clandestine aliyah possible on a small scale. In contrast, Syria's resolute opposition to aliyah and the strict guard on the roads in Transjordan by local police and British troops almost totally prevented aliyah by this route. Travelling eastward via Iran was not feasible either at the time; on the contrary, Jews travelling from Iran to Palestine went through Iraq.

Under these circumstances, aliyah from Iraq and the rest of the Middle East played only a marginal role in the Yishuv's political campaign to open the gates of Palestine. Clandestine aliyah primarily met the needs of the Iraqi Zionist movement, raised members' morale, kept hope alive and ensured that the movement would remain attractive. The Mossad was well aware of the needs, and sincere attempts were made to

open up aliyah routes from Iraq: the failed attempt with the sheikhs from the Sha'alan family and Operation Michaelberg, which succeeded.

The changes in clandestine aliyah and the total dependence on local smugglers complicated the emissaries' job. It should be kept in mind that the aliyah emissaries were all Ashkenazim, were in Iraq illegally and were unfamiliar with the local culture and popular mentality. They spoke the Palestinian dialect of Arabic, but in order to negotiate with the smugglers they had to be fluent in the local dialect and familiar with the local culture. To deal with this problem, the emissaries appointed Yoav Biron of Basra as an assistant to the aliyah emissary; in late 1946 Biron was replaced by Shmuel Moriah, also from Basra. These appointments incidentally neutralized the long-rebellious leadership of this southern branch.

The increased difficulties, failures and disappointments led to disputes between the emissaries and the local aliyah activists. In September 1946, the Hehalutz members complained that Yehonatan Baharav was focusing only on arranging for the aliyah of large groups of 50 or more and was not taking advantage of opportunities to transport individuals.[36] The situation became so bad that the locals asked the Mossad to transfer Baharav to defence matters and to dispatch someone else in his place.[37] Later, the members of the aliyah committee refused Baharav's instructions to hand over a forged passport to an Arab smuggler, on the grounds that the smuggler was not reliable. They turned out to be right. When he finally did receive the passport, the smuggler gave it to the authorities. The aliyah committee was also critical of the dealings with the sheikhs from the Sha'alan family, an initiative of the Mossad in Palestine. It was highly unusual for local members to undermine the authority of emissaries from Palestine; what gave them the confidence to do so was the advantage of being locals. In retrospect, this criticism was one of the first signs of a process that would mature in later years.

After Yehonatan Baharav returned to Palestine in April 1947, he was replaced as aliyah emissary by Shmuel Moriah. In the course of one year, until mid-1948, Moriah brought about the aliyah of approximately 300 members of Hehalutz. Although this was not a breakthrough—and no breakthrough was possible so long as geopolitical conditions along the Iraq-Transjordan-Palestine route remained the same—this aliyah played a major role in ensuring the continuity of Iraqi settlement groups in Palestine and in maintaining the vitality of the Iraqi Hehalutz movement.

OVERLAND ALIYAH AND THE ETHOS OF CLANDESTINE ALIYAH

Between 1944 and 1948, the national struggle of Zionism against the British White Paper policy focused on clandestine aliyah ships bringing Holocaust survivors from Europe. The young Iraqi Jews identified with the struggle of the Holocaust survivors and regarded their own efforts to open overland aliyah routes as part of the same struggle. But the ethos that developed around clandestine aliyah focused almost entirely on the immigrant ships and their struggle to open the gates of Palestine; overland aliyah was left out of the story. In the collective Israeli memory and Israeli historiography, marine-based aliyah is part of the struggle to establish the state, whereas overland aliyah is merely an aspect of illegal aliyah by Jews from Arab countries.

There were several similarities between these two types of aliyah: young people from Zionist and pioneering movements were prominent in both; and both were organized by the Mossad under the auspices of the Jewish Agency, which was also responsible (entirely in Europe and partly in Arab countries) for funding. But whereas aliyah from Europe had the consent and overt or covert assistance of the authorities in the countries that the Jews were leaving, and the struggle revolved around the right to enter Palestine, in the east the struggle took place at both ends—the points of departure and entry—and the first part of the trip was often the more difficult and more dangerous of the two.

The volume of aliyah also differed. About 70,000 people emigrated illegally from Europe to Palestine, most of them from 1946 to 1948. Overland aliyah arranged by the Mossad brought fewer than 10,000 immigrants in the 1940s, with the peak in 1944–1945, when a few thousand Jews came from Syria and several hundred arrived from Iraq, Iran, Turkey and Egypt. In the years when the Zionist movement was waging its dramatic struggle over the clandestine aliyah ships, the aliyah routes from the east were almost totally closed.

The fate of the immigrants was also different: a majority of the new arrivals from Europe were captured and taken to British detention camps in Atlit and later in Cyprus; most of the detainees were freed only after Israel gained its independence. The Jews from Arab countries had to contend primarily with the governments in their countries of origin. Those who managed to reach the Palestinian border were rarely caught, and if they were, they crossed the border again soon afterwards. The main difference was in the realm of public awareness and the media. Voyages of clandestine aliyah ships carrying Holocaust survivors were covered by the world media, and radio and press reports had a major effect on public opinion in the West. The focus was on the struggle for the right to immigrate, not on immigration per se.

As a result of the horrifying revelations of the Holocaust, people in western countries were sympathetic to the plight of the clandestine immigrants. Consequently, aliyah from Europe became one of the main tools in the Zionist struggle for Palestine. In contrast, aliyah from Middle Eastern countries took place secretly, far from the eyes of the media. Its importance was in bringing Jews to Palestine, and media exposure might have put an end to this. Moreover, media coverage would not have elicited public sympathy in western countries, because these immigrants were not perceived as distressed; on the contrary, in the West Zionist activity itself was perceived as having caused the deterioration in the condition of the Jews in Islamic countries.

Thus, even though aliyah from eastern countries was regarded by the emissaries, the local activists and the immigrants themselves as an integral part of the struggle against British policy, and even though it involved a search for new routes, tireless efforts, imagination, initiative and numerous examples of heroism and sacrifice, it did little to help in the Zionist struggle to overturn British policy in Palestine. Nevertheless, overland aliyah was associated with the general clandestine aliyah enterprise by virtue of a song that became very popular. This song was the anthem of the Palmah squad stationed on the northern border, which helped to smuggle in groups of immigrants from Syria. It was written by a member of the squad, Chaim Hefer, and published in *Sefer ha-palmah* [The book of the Palmah]. A close look shows that, like other works about clandestine aliyah, the only song written about overland clandestine aliyah is not about the immigrants themselves but about the Palmah members.[38]

Over pathless hills,
On starless nights,
We lead incessantly convoys of our brethren
To our homeland.

We shall open the gates for the tender children;
We shall shelter the old and downtrodden.

O convoy, don't cry and don't grieve,
Lean on my arm, old sir.
Even those who slammed shut the gates
Will have their comeuppance one day.

We shall open the gates for the tender children;
We shall shelter the old and downtrodden.

This song portrays the young Palestinian Jew in the Palmah—active, strong, powerful, and avenging—offering support to weak, passive immigrants. It depicts the Land of Israel coming to the aid of the ailing exile. The historical truth is that only some of the immigrants were helped by the Palmah, and even they were helped only at the end of the journey In some cases they had travelled thousands of kilometres before encountering anyone from the Palmah. And when immigrants arrived without the involvement of young people from Palestine, the public did not find out about them at all and they were not included in the Israeli historical memory

NOTES

1. Meeting of the Aliyah Bet committee, 2 July 1942, Israel Galili files, Haganah Archives.
2. Sereni to Hans Beyth, 29 July 1942, 29 August 1942, Haganah Archives, 14/19.
3. Guttman, 18 September 1942, Haganah Archives, 14/19.
4. Meeting of the Mapai secretariat, 9 November 1942, file 24/42, Labor Party Archives, Beit Berl.
5. Eldad [Sereni], 23 November 1943, Haganah Archives, 14/19.
6. For example, it was reported that the Meir Shefeya children's village and the Mizrachi Home for Young Women objected to admitting immigrant girls from Baghdad because they tended to settle in towns afterwards (Hans Beyth to Sephardic Organization committee, 13 December 1944, CZA, S75/1812).
7. Detailed instructions on the use of this route, via Aleppo and Damascus, were sent to Iraq on 19 July 1942, by Avigur (From Nissim, Haganah Archives, 14/19).
8. 12 November 1942, Haganah Archives, 14/19.
9. Tzefoni to Nissim [Mardour to Avigur], 1 November 1942, Haganah Archives, 14/19.
10. Avigur, executive committee secretariat, 19 April 1944, p. 20.

11. H.Y. [apparently the Mossad] to Yehiel [Abramovsky], 29 June 1944, Haganah Archives, 14/20.
12. Golani to Pnini [Eshel to Givoni] et al, July 1944, Haganah Archives, 14/20.
13. Bin-Nun to H.G. [Baharav to Mossad headquarters], 18 March 1945, Haganah Archives, 14/21.
14. From H.G., 28 March 1945, Haganah Archives, 14/21.
15. Ben-Yehuda to Bin-Nun [Avigur to Baharav], 14 April 1945, Haganah Archives, 14/21. Avigur rejected Baharav's idea of aliyah from Basra by sea due to the hardships of the voyage, as well as his suggestion of walking from Mosul to Qamishli, but he accepted his suggestion of using guides and counsellors from the Zionist movement in Syria.
16. Twelve people were sent in April and 38 in May (Bin-Nun to Michael [Baharav to Carmil], 30 May 1945, Haganah Archives, 14/22).
17. According to 'Summary of Aliyah Figures for Two Years', a report dated 12 June 1944, CZA, S25/3879.
18. Avigur, minutes of an executive committee meeting, 17 October 1945, Labor Party Archives.
19. B.Gil and M.Sikron, *Rishumhatoshavim 5709* [population census] (1948/49), vol. 2 (Jerusalem: Central Bureau of Statistics, 1956/57), pp. 20–1.
20. Ibid., table 13, p. 21. Presumably, these figures are fairly accurate because there was no emigration from Israel, and mortality within such a short span of time, among a population with a large proportion of young people, was low.
21. Hofshi to Boaz, Assaf and Najib [Shilon, Kopit and Ram], 8 November 1945, Haganah Archives, 14/23.
22. Report by Naim [Yosef Costica], 2 September 1945, Haganah Archives, 14/23.
23. Y.Meir, *Me-ever la-midbar: Ha-mahteret ha-halutzit be-Iraq* [Beyond the Desert: The Pioneering Underground in Iraq] (Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defense, 1973), p. 112; remarks by Bibi at a conference of members of aliyah committees, recordings 641–642, BJHC.
24. Shamai to Hehalutz Department et al., 27 May 1947, CZA, S86/322.
25. Ibid.
26. Berman to Arnon [Iraq to Palestine], 12 April 1948, Haganah Archives, 14/27.
27. This operation is discussed at length in S. Hillel, *Ruah qadim* [East wind] (Jerusalem: Edanim, 1985), pp. 25–54; Y. Meir, *Me-ever la-midbar*, pp. 151–7.
28. These operations have been described in great detail elsewhere. See Bibi, *Me-arba kanfot ha-naharayim* [From the Four Corners of Mesopotamia] (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuhad, 1983).
29. See, for example, remarks by Shilon in October 1945, after 26 immigrants were captured near Mafraq, Transjordan (Boaz to Ben-Yehuda, 27 October 1945, Haganah Archives, 14/23).
30. On the incident with the sheikhs from the Sha'alan family and Sheikh Kuzbari, see Y. Meir, *Me-ever la-midbar,* pp. 138–9.
31. Amir [Yehonatan Baharav] to Artzi, 5 November 1946, Haganah Archives, 14/25.
32. Amir to Arnon [Baharav to Palestine], 19 February 1947, Haganah Archives, 14/26.
33. Artzi to Amir, 1 November 1946, Haganah Archives, 14/25.
34. Harat to Berman [Nameri to Iraq], 24 February 1947, Haganah Archives, 14/26.
35. Yehuda Atlas, *Ad amud ha-teliya* [Until the Scaffold] (Israel: Ma'archot, 1969), p. 163; see also interview on 25 March 1989.
36. Gideon, 23 September 1946, Haganah Archives, 14/25.
37. In contrast, Baharav told the Mossad that, in addition to the difficult 'working conditions', the 'human material' in Iraq was not suited to the harsh conditions of clandestine aliyah. He added that the people who had come with Gideon and whom the Mossad had complained were unsuitable were the best there were (Amir to Artzi, 23 October 1946, Haganah Archives, 14/25). See Y.Meir, *Me-ever la-midbar,* pp. 132–3.

38. Aviva Halamish, ‘Ha-ha’apala: Arakhim, mitos u-metzi’ut’ [Clandestine immigration: Values, myth, and reality], in N.Gertz (ed.), *Nequdot tatzpit—tarbut ve-hevra be-Eretz Yisrael* [Observation Points: Culture and Society in Palestine] (Tel Aviv: The Open University, 1987/88).

8
The Haganah

ESTABLISHMENT OF A JEWISH DEFENCE ORGANIZATION

The founding of a Jewish defense organization in Iraq was one of the Mossad's stated objectives in sending emissaries to Iraq; defence was supposed to be one of the emissaries' main spheres of activity. Ezra Kadoorie was in charge of the matter, and before leaving Palestine he was given brief weapons training at a Palmah base.

When they arrived in Iraq, the emissaries disbanded the local Jewish defence organization, Shabab al-Inkaz, ostensibly due to structural flaws and faulty methods of operation,[1] and they founded a new organization—a branch of the Palestine-based Haganah—in its place. The Haganah activity took place in a house rented by the movement in the centre of the Jewish quarter; drills in hand-to-hand combat and later in the use of firearms were conducted in the basement. When a detailed map of Baghdad was obtained, the main Jewish residential areas were marked on it, locations chosen for weapons caches and defence-squad stations, and defence plans prepared. In October 1942, it was reported that there were seven trios of men aged 18–24 years and three younger trios, as well as a 'liaison group' of teenagers formed to handle communications between the defence squads in an emergency.[2] Grenades, training grenades, bullets, and the first four pistols arrived that month, and Kadoorie purchased another two pistols.[3] In early 1943 grenades, pistols and ammunition were brought in by Egged bus drivers.[4] From now on, the members could train with firearms.

Monia Mardour had been sent to Iraq in October 1942 following the initial failures along the Syrian aliyah route and the emissaries' inability to act. His report, which includes a survey of the Haganah and of the security situation of the Baghdad Jewish community, is our only source from this early date. Mardour began his report with a discussion of the security issue, which he maintained depended on the status of the British in Iraq and the stability of the central government. Later he brought up the main problems facing the Haganah:

1. Most of the Jews in Baghdad lived in the old Jewish quarter, which had large, attached houses and short, narrow alleys. The other two residential neighbourhoods, Batawin and Karadeh, were newer; their streets were wider and longer, and their population was mixed: Jews, Christians and Muslims. The differences between the neighbourhoods necessitated a different defence plan for each type of area.
2. Only small quantities of arms could be sent from Palestine, both because of transport difficulties and because it was generally understood that the Yishuv itself needed weapons to survive. Local weapons were frequently defective and could not be inspected before purchase. Mardour proposed encouraging Jews to buy their own personal weapons.

3. The emissaries were uncertain about how to store the weapons: should they be distributed among the Haganah members or kept in a central cache? They did not trust the local Haganah members and were afraid that letting them hold onto the arms would cause chaos in an emergency. On the other hand, they were afraid that keeping all the weapons in one place was too dangerous; if the hiding place was discovered all the weapons would be lost. Mardour suggested a compromise: putting the weapons in several strategically placed caches that would be under the emissaries' exclusive control.

Who belonged to the Haganah? Some of the members were residents of the Jewish quarter who also belonged to Hehalutz; prominent among them were two counsellors, Rafael Zurani and Gideon Golani. There were also students and graduates of the American school in Baghdad who came from the middle and upper middle-classes and had social and economic connections in Jewish and Arab society alike. This group included Yehezkel Yehuda and his brother Fuad, Uri Shefer (Albert Babai), Eitan (Saleh) Shamash, Avraham Ben-Mordekhai (Tawfiq Murad) and his cousin Naim, and Gourji Shasha.[5] These young people showed no interest in Zionist activity, which at the time meant studying Hebrew. They refused to join the study groups, which were led by counsellors who were sometimes younger than they came from a lower socio-economic class, and were less educated. They were, however, interested in the defence organization and sought to take advantage of the organizational skill, experience, and weapons provided by the Mossad emissaries. Here we find the first point of contact between educated young Jews who were deeply rooted in Iraqi society but whose sense of physical security was shaken by the Farhud of 1941 and the Zionist emissaries, who regarded the military organization as a tool for defend-ing the Jews and ensuring their welfare in the Diaspora. But the former saw the Haganah as a goal in and of itself, whereas for the emissaries it was merely a temporary, essential means to be maintained until the end—turning the Iraqi Jews into Zionists and bringing them to Palestine—could be achieved.

These groups of young people were of special importance in the annals of the Iraqi Zionist movement in general and the Haganah in particular. As noted earlier, they were well educated, affluent, talented, serious, dedicated and willing to take risks to ensure the security of Baghdad Jewry. Few of them were Zionists, at least at this stage, but they were willing to assist Hehalutz and help with clandestine aliyah in exchange for the emissaries' help in establishing the defence organization. They formed the main cadre of Haganah instructors, together with some of the more prominent members of Hehalutz, and some of them later fulfilled vital functions: Yehezkel Yehuda as the head of the Haganah in late 1944 and Ben-Mordekhai as the wireless operator for the underground.

In 1943 defence activity lost some of its urgency Iraq was full of British troops and was under British control, and the lives of the Jews did not appear to be in any danger. The routine work on organizing clandestine aliyah and building up Hehalutz seemed more pressing. Gradually, Ezra Kadoorie came to devote most of his time and energy to Hehalutz, shipments of weapons from Palestine stopped and training began to be taken less seriously Responsibility for the Haganah was transferred temporarily to Aryeh Eshel, and in practice the defence activity was headed by Zurani and Golani. In January 1944, the two held their first target practice with pistols; thirteen members participated.[6]

As the person responsible for the Haganah, Eshel wrote one of the most important documents on this subject.[7] In it he raised the question of the organization's aims and objectives. Was it supposed to be a genuine defensive force that could repel an assault by rioters, or was it supposed to enable the Jews of Iraq to die with dignity, 'a symbol of Jewish heroism like the defense in Warsaw'? Was it intended as an educational device for fostering pride and self-confidence in the local youth or as a means of training them to fulfil defence functions in Palestine? Eshel rejected the last two options, explaining that—despite their importance—they were not why the Haganah was founded in Iraq. However, he vacillated between the first two possibilities: A symbol or a real force?… If there are incidents here…will we be able to defend entire quarters, 100,000 people, with our means? Clearly not'

Eshel was certain that the Haganah in Baghdad was intended to have a real rescue function. He did not regard symbolic shows of heroism as a Zionist objective—and, in fact, they were not a Zionist objective—but rather a last resort. The problem was that the Haganah was not in a position to offer anything but symbolic defence. To make it more effec tive, Eshel proposed increasing its numbers, obtaining more arms instead of making do with the 200 hand grenades that the organization already had, and operating a wireless, because the one that the emissaries had was not working properly. The personnel and weapons were supposed to make sure that they could hold out for a long time in the case of riots, whereas the wireless would enable them to make quick contact with the outside world and stop the attacks. Eshel claimed that, as things stood, no effective defence plan was possible because that would require 'a hundred times the number of people that we have'. Many of the Jews were dispersed in far-off neighbourhoods, and it was hard to prepare an overall defence plan so long as the Haganah was so small and had such limited resources. Eshel seems to have brought up the subject in order to force the Yishuv decision makers to take the problem seriously and to provide the needed resources in accordance with the defined objectives.

Much harsher criticism was contained in a memo to the Mossad from Uri Shefer, an Iraqi Haganah member who had moved to Palestine during the crisis in the summer of 1944. According to Shefer, there were no more than four people qualified to work as instructors and no more than ten capable of defending the Jews if necessary. Even those people, he said, were not adequately trained. Shefer warned that if a pogrom was to break out the results would be disastrous: 'Defense [of] the Jewish group, as it is now, will be only a demonstration of heroism and suicide. What can ten or twenty young men do among a hundred thousand Jews?' He called for giving appropriate defence training to 15–20 immigrants in Palestine and sending them back to Iraq so that they could form the basis of the Haganah there. They could then train 300–500 young men and women within a year. 'If we don't do this immediately, our conscience will not let us rest because we will be too late, and who knows if it isn't already too late now?'[8] At that same time, in the summer of 1944, the first step was taken toward solving the problem.

In May 1944, two members of the Haganah were sent to Palestine: Avraham Ben-Mordekhai went to take a wireless operators' course and Yehezkel Yehuda went to a squad commanders' course. When he returned in September of that year, Yehuda was put in charge of Haganah activity.[9] This was an important step towards the independence of the organization. Furthermore, Baghdad Jewry had a definite interest in the existence of the Haganah, and the organization was accepted by many people in the community,

especially the young generation, including opponents of Zionism. It was assumed that the Haganah would be able to function under the leadership of a local person who would be subordinate to the emissaries. Less time was needed to train a Haganah commander than to train a counsellor for Hehalutz, because the position did not require ideological training, new values and knowledge of Hebrew. But when Yehuda returned, it turned out that the local members refused to accept his authority, perhaps because he tried to introduce a 'full-fledged military regime',[10] perhaps because of the cliquishness and age of the members, or perhaps because Yehuda had no Zionist background. But there was also another factor that was seen again later: the members had a hard time accepting the authority of a local person, one of their own. It seems that they preferred an emissary from Palestine—a foreigner—to a local.

In December 1944, Aryeh Eshel again demanded weapons and a defence emissary. He also mentioned an arms shipment that had been expected and noted that its failure to arrive had been a terrible disappointment for the Haganah members, 'who had been promised this festively more than once'.[11] The Baghdad branch council held two meetings, during which Yehezkel Yehuda and Eitan Shamash lambasted the emissaries. A month later Shamash resigned from the branch council. Unquestionably this was the low point in the history of the Haganah: no permanent emissary, no weapons, no training. It was a bitter disappointment to the young Haganah members who had helped the Zionist movement with everything asked of them and had not received what they had expected—the buildup of the Haganah—in return. In February 1945, the emissaries reported mounting tension between them and the members:

> In general they are full of complaints about Yehiel [Abramovsky] and Golani [Eshel] and get hung up on all sorts of little things… and make allegations against us, against Palestine, and against everything. They are full of accusations that they were promised defense devices [weapons] and that the promise was not kept. In general, we seem to owe them a lot.[12]

The young people's refusal to help with clandestine aliyah disappointed and infuriated the emissaries: Their world is a card game and the like. No salvation will come from them,'[13] wrote Yehoshua Baharav. Givoni added:

> This whole gang—Avraham [Tawfiq Murad], Yisrael [Yehezkel Yehuda], Eitan [Shamash], and the rest—is very far from serious Zionism and even farther from Zionist *hagshamah:* a bunch of lazy bums, card players, or partyers! Only Avraham still bears a little of the movement's burden, but the rest have basically left it and only retain its glorious name… Bin-Nun [Yehoshua Baharav], who needs their help, their contacts, hah, strikes the rock a lot but gets very little water out…[14]

The emissaries chose to ignore the young people's justified complaints about failure to send weapons and to provide training. After all, it was clear to the emissaries that they were not all Zionists, and that the help they gave the movement was contingent upon its running the Haganah. Givoni's attitude toward Avraham (Tawfiq Murad), who 'bears a little of the movement's burden', is particularly surprising. He had returned from

Palestine a few months earlier and was already running the secret wireless station and fulfilling various functions in the movement, including as a member of the Baghdad branch council and a delegate to the second Hehalutz conference. Tawfiq had the most difficult and hazardous job in the Zionist underground in Iraq, one that involved daily danger. He did this job for five straight years, from October 1944 until 1949, taking extremely heavy responsibility and jeopardizing his family, including his wife and his brother, the retired Supreme Court justice Yehezkel Murad, in whose home he lived.

DAN RAM'S DEFENCE PLAN

In 1945, the demand for a Haganah emissary fell on willing ears. The postwar changes expected in the Middle East, the escalation of the struggle for independence in Arab countries, and concern that the Jews in Arab countries might be harmed as a result of the Jewish-Arab conflict in Palestine evoked fear among the Yishuv leadership that the terrible predictions would come true. In July 1945, Dan Ram, a Palmah man from Kibbutz Hanita, was sent to Iraq to re-establish the Haganah there. His mission was part of a broad programme of posting Haganah personnel to the Middle East and Europe: Sasson Novick and Yeruham Cohen went to Syria and Lebanon, and Shlomo Havilio went to Egypt. In August 1945, Palmah men set out for Europe, and in February 1946 Nahum Shadmi (Kramer) was sent to Europe to command the Haganah there. Dozens of Haganah emissaries were active throughout Europe, especially in the DP camps in Germany. A few went on to North Africa. Dan Ram worked in Iraq from June 1945 until March 1946, concentrating on three elements: preparing a defence plan; establishing a stable organizational structure; and stockpiling weapons.

Most of the Jews in Baghdad lived in the Jewish quarter—a crowded residential area in the centre of town with rows of attached houses separated by narrow alleyways. A considerable number of Jews lived in Batawin, a modern neighbourhood of Jews and Muslims, and in the posh Karadeh neighbourhood. The Jewish quarter and Batawin were divided into sectors and, in each sector, defence posts were put in houses overlooking the approaches to the neighbourhood. Squads were formed and were to be stationed at these posts when a state of alert was declared. A commander was assigned to each sector, and a higher-ranking commander was assigned to each neighbourhood.[15]

While visiting Palestine in late 1945, Ram presented his defence plan to Yigal Allon, the Palmah commander in charge of defence in Arab countries. Allon approved: 'I took a good look at the defense plan that you drew up and found it worthy of its function.' However, he recommended adding two mobile patrols to block the alleys at the rear of the posts:

> The reserve that you have left yourself is not strong enough, and it should be bolstered even at the cost of weakening the force at the posts. There is no way to know for sure where the outbreak will come from, but it will undoubtedly have the character of a mob, and with a suitable, flexible reserve you can always block the breaches that develop. Don't worry about weakening the posts…[16]

Ram's defence plan indicates what kind of incidents the defenders expected and how the Haganah was supposed to respond. The defenders in Iraq and the supreme command of the Haganah in Palestine both expected an incited mob to break into the Jewish quarter in order to perpetrate a massacre. Allon assumed that police officers were likely to take an active part in the rioting. However, he believed that such incidents could not go on for long: 'It is clear that even the villainous incumbent government will not be able to permit itself "irregularities" for long, especially if we can mobilize the political intervention of foreign governments.'[17]

Allon drew up guidelines for behaviour in an emergency:

1. He warned against opening fire hastily: 'Your people should not be quick to open fire, so that the plotters have no excuse for an all-out pogrom. But if the enemy launches an attack, take decisive action to prevent a massacre.'
2. He assumed that, when riots broke out, non-members of the Haganah could be mobilized to join the defenders.
3. He defined the Haganah's function and operative goals:

> I believe that your job is to stand fast until we mobilize international diplomatic intervention to help you. You should therefore inform us regularly [by wireless] of what is happening with you, so that we can also act quickly.[18]

This plan was neither original nor new. It was an attempt to implement the ideas that had been brought up by Monia Mardour, Aryeh Eshel and Uri Shefer during World War II. A prominent element of the plan was the basic assumption that the Iraqi government would not take an active role in the riots and could not afford to let them go on for long. Otherwise the Haganah would have no choice but to fight to the death as the Jews did at Masada or in the Warsaw ghetto.

THE ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE HAGANAH

The Haganah, like Hehalutz, had a compartmentalized hierarchy headed by the emissary from Palestine. At its centre were the instructors, and at the base were the rank and file of the organization. Dan Ram gave several courses for instructors; when the new people took up their positions, the ranks of the Haganah could be expanded. Most of the Haganah members came from Hehalutz, but some of them eventually left Hehalutz and remained in the Haganah only. Others—especially the wealthier, more educated ones—came from social circles that had nothing to do with Hehalutz. Many of them lived in the upmarket neighbourhoods—Batawin and Karadeh—and some even fulfilled important functions. The Haganah members were united in wanting to protect Jewish lives. Even those who were not Zionists and had no desire to trade-in Iraq for another homeland felt the need to ensure the well-being and security of the Jewish community in the case of mob attacks. This was their common denominator. In 1948 the leaders of the Haganah were Yosef Meir, a Hehalutz member and commander of the old Jewish quarter; Nissim Abudi, commander of Batawin; Naim Nahum, commander of Karadeh; and Naim

Bekhor, deputy commander of the Haganah.[19] There were few girls in the organization. Two girls joined in 1942, and four years later, in 1946, a group of eight girls joined, all of them counsellors in Hehalutz. Their main role was to provide first aid.

Dan Ram tried to use the Haganah to bring the Jewish community in contact more with Zionist activity. He led a group of about twenty businessmen who bought their own guns and practised under the guidance of a few Haganah instructors. He also conducted a fundraising campaign for Haganah activity and for the purchase of arms, hoping to obtain thousands of dinars, but he was disappointed. 'My impression', he wrote to Shaul Avigur, 'is that "the big plans" to get "thousands of dinars" from the locals Jews verge on a dream, and for now we aren't even seeing "a few hundred".'[20] The fundraising campaign failed because potential donors could not be given any precise information about what the requested donation would be used for, because it had to compete with a campaign by the Lehi emissary in Iraq, and because of the community leadership's unwillingness to help with the campaign.

The fundraising campaign was suggested when it became clear that the budget intended for the Haganah was much too small to meet the needs. In early October 1945, about three months after arriving in Iraq, Ram presented his complaints to the supreme command of the Haganah: weapons and money were not being sent to Iraq, and his budget for three months totalled only 159 Palestinian pounds—80 for routine expenses and 69 for purchasing weapons. 'This is absolutely nothing, if we consider that the initial investment is essential and is also the largest.' He also brought up the issue of the principles behind defence activity in Iraq:

> I am not ignoring the difficulties, the burden, and the worries that exist in connection with the present state of tension over our struggle. But this job that I was given, the security of a Jewish community in the Exile, is also quite an important responsibility. You can hear about the state of my matter and get a professional evaluation from Yiftah [Yigal Allon], and you can get an idea from my letter to him. The equipment in my hands is nothing compared to what the job requires… The 'sword' that I have would be as effective against an attacker as a pinprick; it might stir things up but couldn't scare even the blade of a knife. When our organization dispatches a man to do a certain action, it has to take responsibility for it, whether it wants to or not. My request is that attention be paid to the matter of Berman [Iraq], too (whose fate is closely linked to the state of affairs in Palestine), and that I be provided with the essential minimum.[21]

Without financial resources, it was impossible to establish an organization with deterrent ability and endurance. On the contrary, the organization's weakness and inability to provide defence was liable to be detrimental to the community.

Deliveries of first-aid equipment, arms and ammunition began to arrive in late 1945, and the financial problem was solved in February 1946 when the Haganah in Palestine took over the funding of defence activities in Iraq, as part of its overall programme of posting Haganah emissaries to the Middle East, Europe and North Africa.[22] In addition to weapons from Palestine, weapons were purchased locally: pistols that were imported legally from England and tommy guns, pistols and grenades bought from arms smugglers

in southern Iraq (these were leftovers from the war, many of which had been stolen from British armories).[23]

Ram returned to Palestine in March 1946, and in November Mordechai Ben-Zur arrived. Ben-Zur, a Palmah man, adopted the organizational structure and methods of operation set up under Ram. He demanded that the instructors, commanders and rank and file of the Haganah dedicate themselves to the activity or resign. He organized a three-day training camp in a village near Baghdad for about 20 members; organized courses for instructors, including a half-year course for 18 people, most of them not members of Hehalutz; and delegated authority for training to the senior commanders, thus contributing to the independence of the organization. Under Ben-Zur, the Karadeh neighbourhood was made a separate defence zone, like the old Jewish quarter and Batawin.

Although the defence activity focused mainly on the Baghdad branch, there was interest in expanding it to the other cities. 'Have you started working in the provinces yet?' Yigal Allon asked Ben-Zur in a letter dated 28 May 1947. 'I hear that the Jews there need a lot of help. Is this true?'[24] A Haganah branch in Kirkuk was founded around that time in response to demands from Hehalutz members there. It had about 15 members and a few instructors. The Haganah branch in Basra was founded in 1945; like the Hehalutz branch there, it was the result of the initiative and work of David Hakham, Shmuel Moriah and Yoav Biron. These young men received assistance from soldiers from Palestine in obtaining weapons for training, guidance manuals and, of course, the training itself. They took a group of Hehalutz members and turned them into the first Haganah squad, and they subsequently obtained arms from private smugglers. After the emissaries in Baghdad found out about the defence organization in Basra, Dan Ram went there on Sukkot 1945. He recruited more members for the Haganah there, taught them how to use weapons, mapped out the Jewish areas of the city and set up a defence plan. The Haganah members learned how to make bombs, which they then stored in caches together with the weapons and guidance material. The number of members and instructors grew: by 1946 there were eight instructors and about 120 members, all of whom also belonged to Hehalutz. The oath taken by new recruits in the Haganah reflected the local character of the organization: it included excerpts from prayers and a pledge of discipline.[25] A group of girls was later formed to provide first aid.

In 1946, after the evacuation of the British troops, weapons were smuggled out of the army base near Basra and became available in large quantities for a low price. The vast majority of weapons purchased were intended for Baghdad, with a minority for Basra.[26] One of these arms purchases put an end to the independence of the Basra branch of the Haganah. The branch members sold weapons to the Haganah in Baghdad for more than they had paid for them and used the profits to buy more weapons for their own branch, on the grounds that the organization in Baghdad was richer. After the incident was discovered and investigated, David Hakham resigned as head of the Haganah in Basra, and the organization was taken over by young people whom the emissaries trusted more.[27]

PREPARATIONS FOR AN EMERGENCY

Several incidents that occurred between 1945 and 1948 worried the Jewish community and evoked fear of organized mob violence against the Jews. Trouble was always feared on 2 November, the anniversary of the Balfour Declaration, especially in 1945 due to political ferment in Iraq and the rest of the Middle East. On 25 October 1945, Dan Ram told Allon of the Haganah's plans for the day and asked for weapons:

1. Awaiting a decision by the government of Berman [Iraq] regarding November 2. The people will be on alert. The course of action is not to respond to demonstrations and isolated beatings because our force is small, and to prevent provocative allegations. We will do our best in the event of a break-in to the ghetto.
2. Send supplies quickly.[28]

The day passed quietly for the Iraqi Jewish community, although there were riots in Cairo and Tripoli.

A few days later, the Baghdad police prohibited gatherings and foiled an attempt to instigate anti-Jewish riots.[29]Tension mounted again in May 1946, when the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry published its conclusions, but that, too, passed relatively quietly thanks to police intervention.[30] The UN partition resolution of 29 November 1947, followed by stormy demonstrations against the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty signed in Portsmouth, Britain, caused extreme tension and elicited a state of alert by the Haganah. The daily demonstrations prompted discussions of defence procedures and open-fire regulations, and explicit instructions were issued stating that only an invasion of the Jewish neighbourhood by a rioting mob would constitute a sufficient pretext for action by the Haganah and for opening fire.[31]

The British Mandate for Palestine was scheduled to expire at midnight between 14 and 15 May 1948, and as the date drew near, the tension in the Iraqi street increased again. Huge anti-Zionist demonstrations were held. On 13 May, a report from Baghdad stated: 'The tension is the same as yesterday Fear prevails… Many of the Jews who live near Arabs have evacuated their homes and moved into the ghetto. We are making preparations and trying to get in contact with the community.'[32] At the time, the Haganah in Iraq had more than 300 members, a few dozen rifles and machine guns, about 170 pistols and about 300 grenades. Most of the weapons were in Baghdad; the rest were in Basra and Kirkuk.

The next day—14 May—the two emissaries working in Iraq at the time, Yerahmiel Asa and Yehuda Rabinowitz, were invited to meet with the community representative, David Sala (Salman). Sala warned the underground not to resort to the use of arms and informed them that the police were prepared and had pledged to protect the Jews.[33] This indicates that the leaders of the Jewish community knew about the Haganah and were afraid of rash action on its part, preferring to rely on the Iraqi police.

Due to the severity of the expected incidents, and perhaps as a result of the conversation with Sala, the Haganah set forth more stringent procedures for sending its regular forces into action: it was decided that they would be used only after stones, broken objects and private firearms failed to deter the rioters. Even then, the sector

commander would need prior authorization from the regional commander. In the end, the Haganah was not put to the test. On 15 May when it was announced that Arab armies had entered Israel, the government imposed martial law throughout the country and a prohibition on bearing arms or gathering in the streets. The danger of riots passed and the Haganah relaxed its state of alert. A few months later, in September, Asa summed up the events:

> The way things developed, it's a miracle that what we were afraid of didn't happen… We received notice that the Istiqlal party had decided to attack the Jewish neighbourhoods… Our forces barely sufficed to delay the attack, if there were one, by half an hour; we certainly could not have saved [the people]… Organized defense …existed only in Baghdad.[34]

PROSPECTS AND DANGERS

A survey of the characteristics and methods of operation of the Haganah in Iraq shows that there were operative difficulties and a moral dilemma. The Haganah was an underground within an underground. Whereas the existence of a pioneering Zionist movement was an almost-open secret in the Jewish community, Haganah activity was concealed even from the Jewish population at large and even, in most cases, from the members' families, the community establishment and, of course, the authorities. Maintaining secrecy was made difficult by the nature of the activity: the need to take weapons out of caches for training, the need to move the caches around for security reasons, the presence of training equipment of various kinds, the existence of a wireless and routine daily communication with Palestine. Any exposure might hint at the existence of an underground military organization associated with the Yishuv. Furthermore, irresponsible use of Haganah weapons was liable to provoke riots.

The supreme command of the Haganah in Palestine was aware of this dilemma, but it saw no alternative. Abolishing the Haganah was perceived as abandoning Iraqi Jewry to potential riots, which seemed quite probable at the time. The likelihood of defending Jewish lives appeared to exceed the risk involved. Moreover, the Zionist movement had been guided from its very inception by the idea of self-defence, and in the second half of the 1940s, after the Holocaust in Europe, the principle of not 'going like sheep to the slaughter' had become hallowed in the Jewish and Yishuv consciousness. Even if the movement could not protect the Jews' lives, it would enable them to die in dignity—and this was not expected to happen, since the Haganah leaders believed that organized annihilation under Iraqi government auspices was unlikely. In this respect, Baghdad was not perceived as another Warsaw ghetto.

The Haganah leaders in Iraq, the emissaries, and especially the local rank and file were also aware of this dilemma, but they demanded action anyway. The still-fresh memory of the Farhud of June 1941 and the desire to prevent a recurrence tipped the scales. The organization decided to deal with the problem on the operative level—by establishing an effective, well-equipped, trained, well-disciplined and compartmentalized organization and instituting strict open-fire regulations. The task was made easier by a consensus in the Jewish community regarding the Haganah: the Haganah leaders knew

that it was highly unlikely that members would be turned in by Jewish informers or collaborators.

At the time, the Haganah in Baghdad was still drawing more and more members—and especially instructors and commanders—who did not belong to Hehalutz. Only in the old Jewish quarter was this not the case. Because coordination was required between routine Hehalutz activity and Haganah activity it was decided that the commander of the old Jewish quarter would also be a member of Hehalutz. According to the testimony of Yosef Meir, commander of the quarter from 1946 to 1949, he was the only Hehalutz member to serve on the Haganah staff in Baghdad.[35] It seems that the Haganah was much more attractive and prestigious than Hehalutz and drew people from higher social circles in the Jewish community Although there was little contact between the two organizations, the Haganah's success was credited to Zionism, both because the Mossad emissaries were in charge of the Haganah and because the Jews at large were unaware of the differences between the organizations and used the term 'the movement' to refer to all Zionist activity. When times were rough, such as during the mass immigration to Israel, Haganah members would join the Zionist circle. This fact had ramifications for the status of the Zionist movement in the Iraqi Jewish community during the mass aliyah.

NOTES

1. Sereni, meeting of the Aliyah Bet committee, 2 July 1942, Israel Galili files, Haganah Archives.
2. Report by Mardour, 1 November 1942, Haganah Archives, 14/19; letter from Sereni, no details stated, 9 October 1942, Haganah Archives, 14/19; Y.Meir, *Me-ever la-midbar: Ha-mahteret ha-halutzit be-Iraq* [Beyond the Desert: The Pioneering Underground in Iraq] (Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defense, 1973), pp. 62–4.
3. Report by Mardour, 1 November 1942.
4. Meir Mardour, *Shelihut aluma* [Secret Mission] (Israel: Ma'archot, 1957), p. 84; Y. Meir, *Me-ever la-midbar,* pp. 72–4.
5. Y.Meir, *Me-ever la-midbar,* p. 70.
6. Uriel [Eshel] to the S[upreme] C[ommand of the Haganah], 2 February 1944, Haganah Archives, 14/20.
7. Ibid.
8. 'Memo on the Security Situation of Baghdad Jewry', July-August 1944, Haganah Archives, 14/20.
9. Interview with Yehezkel Yehuda, recording no. 602–3, BJHC.
10. Y.Meir, *Me-ever la-midbar,* pp. 85–6.
11. Ibid.
12. Bin-Nun to Hofshi [Yehoshua Baharav to Nameri], 6 February 1945, Haganah Archives, 14/21.
13. Ibid.
14. To Hofshi, Golani, et al., 20 February 1945, Haganah Archives, 14/21.
15. Y.Meir, *Me-ever la-midbar,* pp. 114–15.
16. Yiftah to Ramadan [Allon to Dan Ram], 1 January 1946, *Sefer ha-palmah* [The book of the Palmah], vol. 1 (Tel Aviv: 1955/56), p. 836.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. List of underground activists in Iraq, in Y.Meir, *Me-ever la-midbar,* pp. 245–50. Of the 77 Haganah instructors and commanders, only 29 were also counsellors in Hehalutz.

20. Najib to Ben-Yehuda [Dan Ram to Avigur], 20 October 1945, Haganah Archives, 14/23.
21. Najib to Supreme Command, 9 October 1945, Haganah Archives, 14/23.
22. Artzi to Boaz and Amir [Mossad to Shilon and Yehonatan Baharav], 30 January 1946, Haganah Archives, 14/24.
23. Y.Meir, *Me-ever la-midbar,* pp. 147–9.
24. Yiftah to Murad [Allon to Ben-Zur], *Sefer ha-palmah,* vol. 1, p. 837.
25. Interview with Hakham, 1978, no. 70, p. 37, BJHC.
26. Y.Meir, *Me-ever la-midbar,* p. 148.
27. Ibid., p. 146; interview with Hakham conducted in 1978, no. 70, p. 48; interview with Yoav Biron, recording 546, BJHC.
28. Najib to Yiftah, 25 October 1945, Haganah Archives, 14/168. On 1 November 1945, Allon replied: 'Approve course of action in the case of riots' (Yiftah to Najib, Haganah Archives, 14/168).
29. Boaz to Atara [Shilon to Political Department], received 5 November 1945, Haganah Archives, 14/23.
30. 'Yesterday passed relatively quietly, except for a few cases of minor clashes between the police and the mobs. Our weapons were not used because there was no need to use them. We remain on alert, because the tension among the Muslims has not yet died down' (from Amir [Baharav], 11 May 1946, Haganah Archives, 14/24).
31. Y.Meir, *Me-ever la-midbar,* pp. 160–2.
32. Baghdad to Mossad, Haganah Archives, 14/27.
33. Testimony of Yerahmiel Asa, 19 August 1964, Haganah Archives, no. 4469; Asa, 'Be-ahat mi-galuyot Yisrael' [In one of the Jewish Exile communities], *Mi-bifnim* 13 (April 1949), p. 648.
34. Address by Asa to the Mapam political committee, 14 September 1948, in Asa, 'Be-ahat mi-galuyot Yisrael'. In a letter written around that time, he noted: 'I admit that when I was alone and tried to picture the situation of this Exile community, which was at risk of annihilation and had not been prepared to defend itself properly, I was struck by a dreadful feeling of bitterness. How long, how long will these Jews be treated as stepchildren?' in Asa, 'Be-ahat mi-galuyot Yisrael', p. 648.
35. Yosef Meir, 'From Membership to Command', lecture at BJHC, 26 June 1989.

Part II
PREPARING TO LEAVE IRAQ

9
A Community Trapped: Iraqi Jewry during the War of Independence

On 15 May 1948, after Israel had declared its independence and been invaded by the Arab armies, Iraqi Jewry entered an era of persecution. The persecution gradually diminished toward the end of the year when the fighting stopped, but it resumed in October 1949, this time aimed directly at the Zionist underground. The persecutions were perpetrated at the Iraqi government's initiative and were official government policy To understand this new development, we have to explore the motives and objectives of the Iraqi government: did it no longer consider the Jews allies? Was it planning to deport them or prod them to emigrate? Or was this, from the government's perspective, just a passing episode related to the circumstances of the war, after which the Jews would recover their previous status?

The Israeli government was also an interested party—albeit unofficially—with respect to the Iraqi Jews, both because ever since the One Million Plan was drawn up Iraqi Jews had been regarded as potential Israeli citizens and because Israel was running the Zionist activity in Iraq. Moreover, the persecutions were a response to the establishment of the State of Israel, and the Israeli leaders considered themselves responsible for the fate of Iraqi Jewry. Consequently, we should examine how the Israeli government responded to the persecution of the Iraqi Jews, what actions it took and what effects these actions had.

The third party involved was Iraqi Jewry itself. How did the local Jews react to the persecution, how did they interpret and explain it and how did they view their future? To answer these questions we will look at the events of the period through the actions and perspectives of the three sides of the Jewish-Arab-Israeli triangle: the policy, motives, objectives and methods of the Iraqi government; the Israeli government's attitude towards the persecution and the actions that it took in response; and finally, the effects of the events on the Iraqi Jewish community. We will also look at the positions of the great powers—Britain and the United States—vis-à-vis the situation of Iraqi Jewry and the effects of these positions on the policies of the parties involved.

POLICY STORMS IN IRAQ

The year 1948 began in Iraq with tumultuous demonstrations against the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty signed in Portsmouth, Britain, on 15 January.[1] Cooperation between the nationalist right and the communist left in opposition to the treaty resulted in violent street demonstrations on a daily basis that rocked the foundations of the Hashemite regime and brought Iraq to the brink of a coup. Although a coup was prevented by the fall of the

government and by the fact that the regent, Abd al-Ilah, ignored the Portsmouth treaty, the Iraqi street remained controlled by the mobs, and all the pro-British politicians who had led Iraq since independence lost their power and status. The prime ministers of Iraq in 1948 were Mohammed al-Sadr (January-June) and Muzahim al-Pachachi (June 1948-January 1949), both distinguished personalities who were not part of the pro-British political circle and whose governments included ministers who identified with the anti-British elements.[2] Al-Sadr's government included the nationalist Istiqlal party, and in al-Pachachi's government there was a bitter struggle between the Right, led by Defense Minister Sadiq al-Bassam, and those loyal to the Hashemite regime.[3] Towards the end of the Pachachi government's seven months in power, the forces loyal to the regent, Abd al-Ilah, and the advocates of the pro-British orientation gained strength, and in January 1949 they returned to power, with Nuri al-Said as prime minister. While in office (until December 1949), Nuri restored the power of the regime. He made peace with the nationalists and persecuted the communists. By deciding the conflict, he ensured the survival of the Hashemite regime for another decade and reinforced his own status as the strongest politician in Iraq, the mainstay of the British in the Middle East.[4]

The internal weakness of the Hashemite regime in Iraq in early 1948 had repercussions on its Palestine policy In late 1947 and early 1948, Iraq took an extreme stand on the Palestine issue, openly demanding the intervention of the regular Arab armies in the war against Israel. The purpose of this demand was to continue covering up the negative image of the Iraqi regime in the eyes of Arab rulers and peoples,[5] although it may also have been aimed at propping up the regent's status within Iraq. In March and April, not long before Israeli independence, the street demonstrations intensified, with the mobs and the press pressuring the regent to act. After the Arab League council met in Cairo in April 1948, the Iraqi regent played the role of active mediator between Arab countries. He pressured Egypt to take part in the invasion of Israel and even sent an Iraqi expeditionary force on this mission. It is assumed that 'it was his survival instinct in difficult political circumstances that led him to involve the Iraqi army in Palestine'.[6]

On 15 May, Iraqi forces invaded Palestine along with the other Arab armies. On the same day, the Iraqi government declared martial law throughout Iraq. The suspension of criminal and civil law and the enactment of emergency laws were meant to ensure quiet and stability, but they were particularly useful to the government for resolving domestic problems: limiting opposition activity jailing communists, and imposing restrictions on the press. By means of martial law, in force for a year and a half (May 1948–December 1949), the Iraqi government enforced political and social quiet with a heavy hand. Street demonstrations ceased almost completely, political parties were weakened,[7] the communist opposition was severely persecuted, and the far right did not dare instigate any more riots. But in contrast to its success in suppressing its political opponents, the Iraqi regime failed miserably at rehabilitating the economy Iraqi governments were unable to downsize the governmental bureaucracy and did not dare implement a reform that would divide up the tax burden more fairly Drought and crop failures, the cost of the war and the upkeep of troops in Israel, and the losses caused by the closure of the oil pipeline to Haifa further exacerbated the economic crisis.[8]

PERSECUTION OF THE JEWS IN IRAQ

The war against Israel and active Iraqi participation in the fighting had serious repercussions in the Iraqi Jewish community.

In mid-July 1948, the Iraqi parliament declared Zionism, like communism and anarchism, a crime punishable by from seven years in prison to death (Amendment to Law No. 51, enacted in 1938).[9] Because the amendment did not explicitly define 'Zionism', the matter was open to interpretation. Coming so soon after the enactment of the emergency laws, the amendment legitimized arbitrary actions against Jews. The general public perceived Iraqi Jewry as a fifth column. The government officially shared this view, even though its leaders knew full well that the vast majority of Iraqi Jews were completely loyal to Iraq. But these politicians could not disown the repeated warnings and declarations that they themselves had made regarding the Jews. Moreover, they thought their stance would serve as a bargaining chip to pressure Israel to soften its attitude towards the Palestinian Arabs, thereby giving Iraq a good reputation. Mostly, however, they hoped to win over Iraqi public opinion.

By taking the Iraqi Jews hostage, with their fate contingent on the fate of the Palestinian Arabs, Iraq invented an equation that did Iraqi Jewry an injustice. These Jews were not a party to the Arab-Jewish conflict and could not be held responsible for the actions of the Israeli government. On the contrary, as the British historian Stephen H. Longrigg attests, 'The Baghdad Jews vied ostentatiously with Muslims in anti-Zionist fervour and subscribed heavily to funds for the refugees.'[10]

Thus, the Iraqi government used the anti-Zionism law and the emergency laws to implement an ambivalent policy vis-à-vis the Jews: while protecting them and their property from rioters on the far right, it also instituted oppression and discrimination.

The physical and economic security of the Jewish community suffered from numerous restrictive measures instituted during the War of Independence. In late November 1947, their freedom of movement was restricted, and as of May 1948 Jews were barred from travelling abroad unless they posted a bond of 2,000 dinars and obtained approval from the defence minister.[11] Jews were compelled to contribute to the Palestinian Arab cause, and wealthy Jews were arrested on various pretexts and fined heavily. Hundreds of Jews were arrested and many were sentenced to jail terms or fined for contact with Zionists or membership of Zionist organizations; the incriminating evidence consisted of letters received from relatives and friends in Israel. The Israeli Foreign Ministry estimated that, between May and August 1948, between 250 and 300 Jewish merchants were jailed on charges of ties with Zionism.[12]

The British ambassador, Sir Henry Mack, reported that in trials being held in Basra behind closed doors, Jews holding responsible positions in the port, in the Railway Administration, and in foreign companies were being prosecuted on charges of Zionism. Memoranda from the Middle East Division of the Israeli Foreign Ministry describe the charges in detail: the Jews were accused of divulging to the Zionists a plan for defending the Basra port.[13] Mack also noted the injustice done to the retired Jewish judge Reuven Battat. Battat was convicted of Zionism and sentenced to three years in jail because of a verdict he had issued back in 1923, in favour of Keren Hayesod in connection with a trust

established by a Jew from Basra. He was pardoned after three months in jail.[14] In all these trials, the amendment to Law No. 51 was employed. In August 1948, the Finance Minister rescinded two Jewish banks' licences to conduct foreign-exchange transactions, claiming that they were transferring Iraqi capital abroad.[15] Hundreds of Jews were dismissed from jobs in government offices and institutions, and the commercial and financial affairs of Jews suffered due to government-imposed restrictions and, in particular, high taxes. Hundreds of families were left with no source of income. The young people, unable to find jobs and refused admission to institutions of higher education, felt particularly hopeless. It was reported, for example, that in 1948, for the first time ever, the medical school in Baghdad did not admit even one Jewish student. Neither did the college of commerce and economics.[16] The economic crisis did not make it easier for unemployed Jews to find work. Relying on data from the Iraqi Foreign Ministry, Sir Henry Mack reported in December 1949 that 796 people had been dismissed from government jobs, including 261 Jews fired by the Railway Administration.[17] An embassy report in March 1949,[18] however, stated that 350 Jews had been dismissed by the Railway Administration. The disparity suggests that the ministry underreported the number of dismissals. Among those who lost their jobs was Avraham el-Kabir, director-general of the Finance Ministry, who was forced to retire after having served his country faithfully for about three decades.[19] The British ambassador also confirmed that restrictions had been imposed on foreign-exchange transactions by one Jewish-owned bank, that Jews were suffering discrimination in the receipt of import licences and that disproportionately heavy taxes had been levied on the Jews.

The anti-Jewish policy reached its peak with the arrest of the Jewish millionaire Shafiq Ades in August 1948. Ades was charged in a military court in Basra with buying surplus military equipment in Iraq and sending it to Israel. His Muslim partners were not prosecuted. After a hasty trial in September 1948, he was sentenced to death by hanging and fined five million dinars. The trial was conducted at a time when news of the defeat of the Arab armies by Israel was beginning to reach Iraq. The trial enabled the authorities to keep public opinion preoccupied while letting the masses vent their anger and frustration.

In late September, it looked as if the Jews' situation was starting to improve. After Nuri al-Said regained power in January 1949, the pressure exerted on the Jews by the military regime was eased. The end of the war, the armistice agreements signed by Israel and its neighbours, the growing strength of the supporters of the Hashemite regime, the relative calm that prevailed in the Iraqi streets and the easing of the pressure on the Jews all made it look increasingly probable that the discriminatory measures would be gradually repealed. The Jews of Iraq looked forward to this eagerly.

But just then a suggestion was made to deport the Jews of Iraq. In January 1949, in a conversation with the British ambassador to Iraq, Nuri al-Said threatened to deport the Iraqi Jews unless Israel let the Palestinian Arab refugees return to their homes in Israel and receive compensation.[20] The British objected. In July, Nuri proposed the forced deportation of 100,000 Jews from Iraq to Israel in exchange for the settlement of 100,000 Palestinian Arab refugees in Iraq. The property of the Iraqi Jews would be used to finance the settlement of the Palestinian Arabs in exchange for the property that they had left in Israel.[21]

In September the subject was considered by the British missions in the Middle East in a round of position papers and was totally rejected.[22] A month later, in October 1949, at the height of the persecutions of the Zionist underground in Iraq, Nuri again proposed his plan to exchange Iraqi Jews for Palestinian Arab refugees. The plan was presented to the UN Economic Survey Group, which was looking into options for settling the Palestinian Arab refugees in Middle Eastern countries.[23]

At this point the plan was presented to Israel unofficially. Israel agreed to take in the Jews of Iraq, but only if they left Iraq freely and were permitted to take their property with them. Foreign Minister Moshe Sharett declared that Israel would not agree to take the Jews of Iraq as destitute displaced persons,[24] and he thus made it clear that Israel was not willing to relinquish the Arab property in its possession or the property of the Iraqi Jews that it hoped to receive. The fall of Nuri's government in December 1949 put an end to the discussion of these proposals. Nuri's idea of a population transfer, whether proposed as a basis for negotiations or as a threat of deportation, never went beyond an idea, was never considered as an operative plan, and was not taken seriously by anyone in Arab countries, Israel, Britain or the United States. Moreover, the content and timing of the proposals indicate that they had to do not with the Jewish context but with the Palestinian Arab context, since they were brought up when the subject was being discussed in the UN, in the Palestine Conciliation Commission, and at the Lausanne Conference,[25] and especially when Iraq and Syria were being asked to resettle some of the refugees. Throughout that time (1948–1949), Iraq took in only about 5,000 refugees and consistently refused to admit any more, despite British and American efforts to persuade Iraq and Syria to do more to solve the problem. The implication is that Nuri's proposals for a forced population exchange were not intended to solve either the problem of the Palestinian Arab refugees or the problem of the Jewish minority in Iraq, but to torpedo plans to resettle Palestinian Arab refugees in Iraq. He knew that Britain and the United States would not condone the deportation of Iraqi Jews to Israel. It should also be kept in mind that the proposal called for using the Jews' property to settle the refugees in exchange for property left in Israel. The British, too, referred to the property issue and cast doubt on the likelihood of success of the arrangement, noting that the refugees' property had already been seized by Jewish immigrants, mainly those who came from Europe in Israel's first year of independence. A summary prepared at the end of the round of position papers (3–4 November 1949) states: '[The embassy in] Tel Aviv says that Israel is unlikely to compensate Iraqi Jews in the present state of national finances, and it is unlikely that Iraq would allow them to take their property with them.'[26] Presumably, Nuri was also aware of the Israeli stance and included the Jews in his proposal for settling Palestinian Arab refugees in Iraq to make it more difficult to implement and to exempt Iraq from having to help solve the refugee problem—which he indeed achieved.

However, even though Nuri's proposals were discussed only as ideas and had no impact on his government's policy vis-à-vis the Jews, we cannot ignore the psychological and social impact of these proposals. The idea of a population exchange was widely publicized in the Iraqi press, whether as a proposal or as a threat. It elicited support from the far right and instilled anxiety and fear in Iraqi Jewry.

In the spring of 1949, a campaign of persecutions was launched against the Communist Party.[27] The emergency laws that had empowered the right to harm the Jews were now used even more brutally to suppress the left. Many of the people arrested were

Jews, and two of them—Yehuda Sadiq and Shlomo Dellal—were executed along with other communist leaders.[28] But these persecutions did not affect the Jewish community because it did not consider itself threatened. The persecutions were perceived as part of the government's struggle against the subversive opposition, and the Jewish community leadership and most of the Jewish middle class, which tended to be conservative, were part of the anti-communist consensus that encompassed all supporters of the regime.[29]

In the spring and summer of 1949, the Iraqi police began taking steps to prevent the organized smuggling of Jews and money out of the country The smuggling, organized by the Mossad, had begun in December 1948 and was taking place all along the Iraqi-Iranian border, especially in the Shatt al-Arab region. By late 1949, hundreds of people were being smuggled out every month. The Iraqi administration was aware that there was organized activity on both sides of the border benefiting from the cooperation of local officials and even the assistance of politicians on the Iranian side. The Iraqi police notched up several successes, and Jews who were caught were given stiff sentences. According to an estimate by the Zionist movement, 150 such people were in prison in September 1949.[30] A new wave of arrests began in October, bringing the Iraqi Zionist movement to the brink of collapse (see chapter 10).

THE ANTI-JEWISH POLICY OF THE IRAQI GOVERNMENT: A DEPORTATION POLICY?

The emigration of Iraqi Jewry en masse just two years after the policy of persecution went into effect leads to the question of whether this policy marked a turning point in the government's attitude toward the Jewish community. Was it an attempt to solve the 'Jewish problem' by emigration, whether voluntary or forced? To answer this question, let us look at the Jewish problem in Iraq in the overall context of the problems, difficulties and constraints that the Iraqi authorities faced in 1948 and 1949.

The weakness of the Hashemite regime was, I believe, the main underlying factor that made the persecution of the Jews possible. It should be recalled that the regime began 1948 in a state of crisis, with demonstrations by the right-wing and left-wing opposition bringing Iraq to the brink of a coup. Unfortunately for the Jews, several of the major centres of power, including important government ministries, were controlled in that fateful year by people from the antisemitic extreme right. These people took advantage of the emergency powers assumed by the Iraqi government on 15 May 1948, to bolster their power in the Iraqi administration. Having waited a long time for a chance to take action against the Jews, they now took the opportunity to do so.

The two governments that served in 1948 were exceptions in the history of the Iraqi monarchy and their policy vis-à-vis the Jews probably says little about the overall intentions of the Hashemite regime in Iraq. The worst cases of persecution of the Jews in 1948 are ascribed to Sadiq al-Bassam, the defence minister in Muzahim al-Pachachi's government. Bassam had a reputation as an antisemite, and according to a rumour that circulated among the Jews, he even came up with the idea of confining them in a concentration camp near Ba'quba.[31] He was in charge of the military tribunals established in May 1948 and was responsible for the numerous trials of Jews in these courts. The trial of Shafiq Ades illustrates how the Jews were made the victims of the struggle between

the nationalist right and the leaders of the regime. Ades was sentenced to death on charges of supplying arms to Israel, despite the manifest displeasure of the regent, Abd al-Ilah, and of Abd al-Ilah's associates and supporters in the government and in parliament. The execution of Ades was an act in defiance of these people. It is no wonder that shortly thereafter, in late September, Sadiq al-Bassam was forced to resign and was replaced by someone loyal to the pro-British oligarchy The government once again had direct control of the judicial system and made it clear that it was determined to be the sole policy maker on the Jewish question. The government policy was explained by Prime Minister al-Pachachi in a discussion in the parliament about Bassam's resignation:

> This government has never declared its opposition to the Jews. We are convinced that the existing law and the Islamic shari'a give the Jews of Iraq the same rights as other citizens. There was thus no anti-Jewish policy that we refrained from implementing. If the previous defense minister, Sadiq al-Bassam, believes that the emergency regime was instituted to oppress the Jews, this is not true. We are proud of our opposition to all unjust acts, because we believe that injustice has never been a good tool for government.[32]

The war in Israel was a decisive factor in determining the attitude toward the Jews in 1948. Under popular pressure, the Iraqi government was swept up into the war itself and into a policy of persecuting the Jewish community.[33] Though intended to placate the right, the persecutions were controlled and restrained so that they would not degenerate into general anarchy or an attempt to overthrow the regime. Therefore, the Hashemite regime carried out detentions and arrests, conducted trials, and extorted money under the emergency laws, but it also used the same emergency laws to protect the Jews against mob violence. When the Arab armies were defeated in the war, the Iraqi government made the Jews the scapegoats for the people's anger, frustration and shame, thus preventing the wrath of the masses, led by the nationalist and pan-Arab right, from being directed at the Iraqi government itself.

The political persecutions were also a convenient way of continuing the 'Iraqization' of the public sector, that is, increasing the proportion of public-sector jobs held by Muslims by giving preference to educated young Muslims in hiring decisions. On security pretexts, Jewish officials were dismissed from their jobs in transportation and communications: in the Basra port, in the postal and telegraph services, and in the Railway Administration, strategic spots where some Jews still remained, despite many years of discriminatory policy, due to their skills, their reliability and their loyalty. The economic crisis also served as a convenient excuse for imposing restrictions and difficulties on Jewish commerce. This discrimination was one more stage in the attempt to give Civil Service jobs to educated young Iraqi Muslims and to ensure that they controlled the centres of economic and political power in the public administration. But now the harm done to the Jews was greater.

Economic motives, too, influenced the political persecutions. The ban on the sale of Jewish-owned real estate and rescinding of the right of Jewish banks to carry out foreign-exchange transactions were said to be aimed at preventing the smuggling of Jewish

capital out of the country. From the Iraqi government's perspective, it is hard not to view these as logical measures.

Two additional factors came into play. Some of the steps taken against the Jews were part of the government's efforts to uncover the underground Zionist movement, which it had known about for a long time. Like any other government, the Iraqi government could not tolerate the existence of an underground organization, especially one supporting an enemy country. Arrests were made on charges that could be linked to Zionist activity, ranging from maintaining correspondence with Israel to smuggling money to Iran, abetting espionage and supplying arms to Israel. But the Iraqi secret police could rarely prove the charges, and they had to resort to the emergency laws to convict the defendants. Sometimes innocent people were convicted, and in many cases against members of the Zionist movement or their relatives, the authorities could not prove their guilt. The severity of the punishment did not always correspond to the severity of the offence, and the methods of arrest and interrogation did not always comply with the principles of international law. The resultant sense of injustice and malevolence destroyed what remained of the Iraqi Jews' trust in their country's legal system. However, it is only fair to mention that throughout that period some Iraqi Jews were indeed supplying Israel with information about the strength of the Iraqi troops sent to the front and about various military and political issues, and others were engaged in illegal activity such as smuggling people and money out of Iraq.[34]

The other factor was corruption in the administration. Much of the anti-Jewish activity was arbitrary, violent and malicious, and was charac terized by extortion, perversion of justice, collective punishment and abuse of suspects' family members. These were side effects of the methods of investigation and punishment practised in Iraq. On the other hand, Iraqi civil servants were not averse to accepting bribes from defendants' families, thereby putting the Iraqi bureaucracy to shame. As a result, the judicial system was seen as arbitrary, and actions taken against the Jews of Iraq were perceived as illogical and therefore extremely threatening, even in understandable cases such as attempts to capture smugglers of Jews and money and to find people linked to the Zionist underground.

To sum up, it is hard to point to a fundamental change in the Iraqi policy vis-à-vis the Jews. Certainly there was no policy of deportation. The persecutions appear to have been the product of a situation into which the Iraqi government was forced due to the weakness of the regime when the country was on the brink of a coup. However, the government was aware that the vast majority of Jews were loyal citizens, and it protected them and their property from rioting mobs, partly in order to prevent anarchy and thus to safeguard its own status. Nevertheless, we cannot ignore the repercussions of the administration's policy: its actions legitimized nationalist tendencies that drove the Jews out of the Iraqi nation. More ominously, this policy linked the Jews of Iraq with the Jewish-Arab conflict in Israel and made them hostages in the conflict. Thus a dangerous precedent was set that would become the guideline for Iraq's attitude toward its Jewish minority in the future, in the context of an unstable Middle East and of fear of a second round in the Israeli-Arab war.

However, the measures taken by the Iraqi government throughout the War of Independence do not suggest any intent to deport the Jews. The government regarded the Jews as an integral part of Iraqi society and the Iraqi state, and they were not permitted to leave the country. The problem that confronted the Iraqi government at the end of the

War of Independence was how to mitigate the fears of the Jewish community and to restore its sense of security and confidence in the government and in the Iraqi homeland, despite the fact that neither the economic problems nor the Zionist-Arab conflict had been resolved. Even worse, by then everyone involved in Middle Eastern affairs was linking the fate of Iraqi Jewry with the fate of the Palestinian Arab refugees. According to the British Foreign Office:

> It should be understood that in the present situation the Jews of Arab countries will suffer certain forms of discrimination, although it is surprising that despite the extreme provocation of the incidents in Palestine [i.e., the massacre in Deir Yassin], so little has been done to discriminate against the Jews in these countries or to harm them.[35]

The American embassy took a similar stance:

> The Iraqis fear that Israel may attempt by aggressive action to expand its present boundaries. If this occurs, the Iraqi attitude toward the Jewish community and the treatment of Jews would change severely for the worse, inducing a greater proportion of Iraqi Jews to want to leave Iraq and face the risks and uncertainties of emigration to Israel.[36]

In other words, Israel's Middle East policy would determine the fate of the Iraqi Jewish community Two Americans who were in Iraq in mid-March 1950 and investigated the situation of the Jews there expressed a similar opinion:

> Americans must remember also what was done with thousands of American citizens of Japanese ancestry during the war with Japan. It has been inevitable that the Iraq Government should take some restrictive measures against Iraqi Jews while fighting the Jewish army in Palestine. There is little doubt that many injustices have been committed during such a war situation.

In conclusion they added:

> Arab sentiment toward the Jews in Iraq is going to be depended on the peace settlement with Israel and with the latter's position in the Middle East… We recognize, however that the governmental attitude towards the Jews will depend also on international events.[37]

THE IMPACT ON THE JEWS

For the Jews of Iraq, the roughest and most threatening time was from May to September 1948, while the war raged in Israel. The detentions and imprisonments on charges of Zionism sowed panic in the Jewish community. Many people burned letters, pictures and books that they thought might be dangerous; others ripped out embroidered Stars of

David and burned prayer books. As Yerahmiel Asa described it,

> Anything with a Jewish symbol was destroyed…and Passover *haggadot* were burned and a Star of David was removed from the Torah scroll… And there was no real reason for it, because Jews were not being arrested for *haggadot;* it was just rumor. People were being jailed for no reason.[38]

The biggest shock was the execution of Ades. Ades was rich, removed from the Jewish community and integrated in Iraqi society. He was on friendly terms with the authorities in Basra and with the leaders of the regime in Baghdad. It was precisely these traits that worried the Jews. If Ades was not immune to antisemitism, what could an ordinary Jew without money and connections expect? All the Jews, from the common people to the most respected of its leaders, were gripped by terror because the trial cast aspersions on the loyalty of the entire Jewish community The obvious injustice of this show trial, at the height of a campaign of anti-Jewish persecution, aggravated the national identity crisis of many Jews and made them question whether they really belonged to the Iraqi state. This crisis is expressed in a memo from the president of the Jewish community to the Deputy Prime Minister of Iraq in October 1949, during another campaign of government persecution (see chapter 10). The community president described his people's expectations and disappointments:

> The Israelite community in Iraq, relying on its 2,400-year history of devotion and loyalty on Iraqi soil, was confident that the Palestine war would not affect its existence or detract from the rights and freedoms that it is guaranteed by law, so long as it obeyed the laws of the land and was loyal to the state. But regrettably, all these hopes proved false. The community suffered because of this war and found itself in an unenviable situation… Nevertheless, many wise people continued to believe and expect that ultimately things would return to their natural state.[39]

Because the Iraqi Jews associated the persecutions of May-September 1948 with the war in Israel, they expected the restrictions and discrimination to be gradually eliminated. This would be the acid test of Jewish survival in Iraq. Indeed, in 1949 the pressure from the military regime was relaxed somewhat. The fear did not vanish, but it became weaker', Avraham Twena, a member of the Jewish establishment, wrote in his memoirs.[40] But the economic restrictions were not lifted and the economic situation did not improve.

'The economic situation of the Jews here has never plunged as far as it has in this period, when the government and conditions came together to strip them of the economic positions that they had held for many generations', said a report in the Hehalutz newsletter, *Niv*, in the autumn of 1949.[41] Financial instability and economic stagnation, due in part to the decline in the Jews' status, added to the problems caused by the dismissals, economic restrictions and extortion by the government. The result was a vicious cycle that hindered economic recovery and the return of the unemployed Jews to work. 'As a result, there is a lot of unemployment and discomfiture', said *Niv*.

> Householders and well-known people wander through the streets with a few shoelaces, combs, matches, and so on, to earn their meager bread. Skilled workers go without work. The Jewish youth who have graduated from school wander in the streets and fill the cafes… From day to day the number going door to door and holding out their hands on street corners—old men and women, and even small children—is increasing.[42]

Nevertheless, the political atmosphere in Iraq in 1949 was relatively quiet, and public attention focused on the government's struggle against the subversive opposition, especially the Communist Party. Although the economic situation of the Jews did not improve substantially, it could be hoped that life would return to normal. As the description in *Niv* goes on to say with its implicit Zionist criticism of the 'complacency' of the wealthy Jews:

> The Jews come and go almost freely, filling the cafes and cinemas, and they have once again begun walking around on the Sabbath in droves. There are still rich Jews who have not been affected by the misfortune. There are still Jews living in beautiful palaces and delighting in luxuries…[43]

The problems that preoccupied the Jewish community in late 1949 are indicated by a memorandum in which Rabbi Kadoorie analysed the issues that preoccupied Iraqi Jewry from the outbreak of the war in Israel until late 1949. The main concern, as he saw it, was the anti-Jewish incitement campaign waged by the press for months without any objection from the government and ostensibly with its encouragement. ('The government is not displeased with this defamation campaign.') The fact that the authorities let the incitement campaign go on for so long and even abetted it was perceived as a sign that the Jewish community had lost the backing and support of the government. The second concern was the economic restrictions and discrimination and their impact on individual Jews and on the community. The ban on leaving the country also distressed the Jewish community. Although it affected very few people, its psychological effects were broader. It 'tightened the noose and turned their situation into an economic and cultural siege'. In the margins of the memo, the community president mentioned the prohibition on the possession and use of arms by Jews, even with a licence. This was a stinging insult to the patriotic elite of the Jewish community and resulted in fears and rumours of possible riots.[44]

At the end of the memo, Rabbi Kadoorie expressed his opinion on how to solve the problem:

> We are convinced that solving this crisis still depends on the wisdom of the illustrious Iraqi government. Removing the exceptional shackles that restrict the freedom of the Jewish Iraqis, treating them as equals with the rest of the citizens of the state, and not discriminating against them in the eyes of the law will all help to restore things to normal and to instill security and tranquility in the hearts of 120,000 Jewish Iraqis who are

> known to be law-abiding, orderly people, workers who are loyal to their Iraqi homeland and to the exalted Hashemite kingdom.

This was the credo of the community leadership, and with these remarks it seems to have faithfully represented the attitude, expectations, and hopes of the Jews.

THE RESPONSE OF THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT

Throughout the War of Independence, Israel paid close attention to the situation of Iraqi Jewry, even though communication between Iraq and Israel had become particularly problematic when all postal and transportation links between the two countries were severed. Under the circumstances, Israel could obtain information in two ways: overtly, by culling it from the press in Iraq and other Arab countries; and covertly, from the Israeli emissaries in Baghdad, through letters smuggled to Israel and over the wireless. While the fighting raged in Israel, two Israeli emissaries were in Iraq: Yehuda Rabinowitz, who worked mainly on Jewish defence, and Shmuel Moriah, who was in charge of illegal aliyah but whose main job was intelligence—providing information about the number of Iraqi troops moving westward toward Israel, along with reports on various aspects of Iraqi policy, actions against Iraqi Jewry, and Zionist activity, which continued even then.

Based on this information, the Israeli government formulated its policy vis-à-vis Iraqi Jewry. In principle, it retained the position set down in the One Million Plan of 1944: the Jews of Iraq, along with the rest of the Jews in Arab and North African countries, were perceived as a pool of potential immigrants who were expected to move to Israel immediately after the Jewish DPs in Europe. The question was how Israel would act in the interim, while Jews were being persecuted in Iraq and were barred from leaving the country. In this respect, Israel adopted a pragmatic strategy that involved a compromise between Israel's needs and political abilities and the needs and welfare of the Iraqi Jewish community. The basic assumptions that dictated the Israeli policy were the assessment by experts in the Israeli Foreign Ministry that the lives of the Jews in Arab countries were not in danger and that Israel was not capable of helping Iraqi Jewry at this stage.

By late 1948, the Foreign Ministry was already acknowledging that things were not as bad as might have been expected. Yaacov Shimoni, acting director of the Middle East Division of the Foreign Ministry, told the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Provisional Council of State on 30 November 1948:

> If, instead of listening to the Jewish heart, we see the truth as it is, the situation is not bad at all. It isn't as we have to present it outwardly. The number of prisoners is small; in Egypt, about 400–500 prisoners out of 80,000; in Iraq, a few hundred out of 110,000. There have been many cases of property confiscation. As for Lebanon, the situation of the Jews there is good, free of disturbances and even economically sound.[45]

The Foreign Ministry assumed that as long as Iraqi-Israeli relations did not become worse, there were no drastic changes in the Iraqi regime, and domestic tranquillity

prevailed there, the lives of the Jews were in no danger. Like the British and Americans, the ministry linked the situation of the Jews to Israeli-Arab relations. Unlike them, the ministry was optimistic:

> As the storm that broke out upon the birth of the State of Israel calms down, they accept its existence as an immutable fact, and relations between Arab countries…and Israel are normalized, the civil status of the Jews of Iraq is likely to become better and better.[46]

The Israeli government believed that as long as the Iraqi government could maintain stability and hold on to the reins of power, no massacre of Jews was expected in Iraq. Nevertheless, Israel could not demand an improvement in the Iraqi Jews' situation or permission for them to move to Israel because it was in the midst of a war with Iraq and any involvement in the affairs of Iraqi citizens was liable to be interpreted as intolerable intervention in the internal affairs of Iraq. It should be kept in mind that Zionism had been a criminal offence in Iraq since 1948, and any attempt by the Israeli government or any Zionist group to intervene in the affairs of Iraqi Jewry could lead to allegations of Zionism against the Iraqi Jews and could make things worse for them. Clearly, even if such intervention gave Israelis the feeling that the Jews of Arab countries had not been forgotten or abandoned, it would not help the Iraqi Jews and might even harm them.

It was clear from Iraq's treatment of the Jews, too, that attempts to intervene would do no good: Iraq made it impossible for Jews to leave the country and simultaneously adopted extremely radical anti-Israel stances. Of all the Arab countries that fought against Israel, only Iraq refused to negotiate and even refused to sign the armistice agreements. Obviously, negotiations over the situation of the Jews were not possible at this point. On the other hand, during and immediately after the war, thousands of immigrants were streaming into Israel from Europe. Large-scale aliyah from Iraq was not an urgent Israeli need and was not even on Israel's agenda. It seems that at this point Israel had no interest in mass aliyah from Iraq.

For these reasons, the Israeli government preferred that Iraqi Jewish affairs be handled by philanthropic and other non-Zionist organizations and individuals, especially the World Jewish Congress, the Anglo-Jewish Association, the Board of Deputies, Jewish members of Congress and the British Parliament. During and after the War of Independence, several Jewish organizations raised the problem of the Jews in Arab countries, including Iraq, with the UN and its institutions and with the British and US embassies and demanded that something be done to improve conditions for them. In the wake of their intercession, the American and British ambassadors in Baghdad were asked to report on the situation of the Jews. Despite an attempt, especially by the British ambassador, to downplay the severity of the anti-Jewish actions and to portray them as a natural, inevitable consequence of the war, their responses confirmed a substantial portion of the claims made by the Jewish organizations.[47] It is hard to know whether the intercession of these groups made any difference in the situation of the Jews, but the ambassadors' intervention and investigations probably showed the Iraqi government that the matter was eliciting interest and that it would have to act with extra caution.

When the fighting ended and negotiations for a ceasefire and armistice agreements were about to begin, and especially when negotiations over a peace treaty were expected,

the situation of the Jews of Arab countries came up again, this time as one of the Israeli government's demands in the expected negotiations. The issue had already been debated by the Provisional Council of State on 29 July 1948, just a few days after enactment of the anti-Zionism law in Iraq. In a report on Count Bernadotte's mission, Foreign Minister Moshe Sharett brought up the problem of the Palestinian Arab refugees:

> The solution to this problem must be part of the comprehensive, organic settlement that will follow in the wake of peace, a settlement that will take into account all the factors impinging upon this problem and all its aspects… The future of the Arabs in Israel, the future of the Jewish communities in Arab countries will then be brought up for a linked discussion, and the responsibility of each of the sides involved for the situation that has developed and for its outcome will be one of the factors in the settlement.[48]

This report set an Israeli precedent by linking the future of the Jews in Arab countries with the future of the Arabs in Israel. Thus Israel adopted the Jewish-Palestinian Arab equation introduced by Arab leaders in the 1940s and accepted by the British and the Americans. But whereas the Arab leaders used their threats and persecutions to try to take the Jews hostage, the Israeli leaders turned the equation around and sought to view the Israeli Arabs as hostages to safeguard the future of the Jews of Arab countries! The Israeli government's stance combined a tactical dimension with a strategic dimension: while taking advantage of the situation to divert international criticism of Israel over the Palestinian Arab refugees, it also made it clear that the issue of the Jews in Arab countries and their immigration to Israel was a national interest of the State of Israel and that it was not willing to pass up an opportunity as important as political negotiations with the Arab countries to bring up this pressing issue.

But when negotiations began over armistice agreements, it turned out that the problem of Iraqi Jewry could not be raised because Iraq did not take part in these negotiations and never signed an armistice agreement with Israel. The Foreign Ministry attempted to raise the problem indirectly in talks with Jordan over the future of the Triangle, where the Iraqi forces had fought. UN mediator Ralph Bunche told the Israelis that they had no chance of accomplishing anything with this demand and advised them to file a complaint with the UN General Assembly based on the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, adopted by the UN General Assembly in December 1948.[49] The complaint was never filed, probably because there were no grounds for it.

A few days later, on 30 March 1949, the Knesset debated the situation of the Jews of Arab countries, following a report on Radio Baghdad that seven Jews had been sentenced to hang for the offence of Zionism. Until it was discovered that all seven had already left Iraq and that the sentence had been passed *in absentia*, Israel was in an uproar and urgent complaints were sent to western governments.[50] The Knesset debate took place after the facts had been thoroughly clarified. The opinions and suggestions brought up in the debate, as well as the response by the Israeli government, indicate that Israeli legislators were dissatisfied with the cautious government response. All the speakers from all shades of the political spectrum agreed that, after its great victory in the war, Israel was in a better position than ever to take action to rescue Jews. The comparison with the

helplessness of the Jews during the Holocaust was ever-present in the background. Most of the speakers, especially those of oriental descent, expressed concern about the possibility of riots and even genocide. Everyone believed that aliyah was the sole solution to the problem.

As for operative proposals, alongside calls to appeal to the United States, European governments and the United Nations and to collaborate with Jewish and other organizations, a demand was voiced that Israel publicly declare itself the representative of the Jews of Arab countries and take responsibility for protecting them as potential citizens of Israel. It was even suggested that Arab countries be threatened with the use of force—although no specific method or means was mentioned—since Israel, it was claimed, was capable of this. Finally it was proposed that the problem of the Jews of Arab countries be included in the armistice and peace negotiations and in the discussions of the refugee problem. At the time, the refugee problem was already a major issue in Israeli relations with Arab countries.

What is interesting about this debate is the suggestion of a population transfer—the proposal to link the settlement of Palestinian Arab refugees in Arab countries with the transfer of the Jews of Arab countries to Israel. The idea was proposed by Eliyahu Eliachar of the Sephardi List at the beginning of the debate:

> I would very much like to ask the Prime Minister to bring up, when discussing the Arab refugees, the issue of the transfer of our Jews, our brethren, who will want to return to the Land of Israel. This card was given to our government by divine providence in anticipation of the problem.

Eliyahu Hacarmeli of Mapai added:

> May the Arab countries accept the loyal Arabs in place of Zionists and Communists, especially since their countries have huge territories just crying out to be settled. Property and exchange issues can be worked out. Such an attempt was already made after World War I—the population exchange between Turkey and Greece. Let us learn from this experience.

According to Ya'acov Gil of the General Zionists:

> An exchange of the Arab refugees for the Jews of Arab countries is the most just, moral, and practical solution, both to the problem of the danger threatening the Jews of Arab countries and for alleviating the distress of the Arab refugees.[51]

In any case, the suggestion was made in the positive sense: voluntary population exchanges backed by the governments of the region and accompanied by mutual financial compensation. The criticism and proposals discussed in the Knesset had no real impact on Israeli policy vis-à-vis Iraqi Jewry both because the proposals ran counter to the Israeli position on population exchanges and due to the marginal status of oriental Jews among Israeli decision makers. The only thing that was new was the revelation that, after the

War of Independence, not only the Iraqis, British and Americans but the Israelis, too, adopted the Jewish-Palestinian Arab equation and linked the fate of the Iraqi Jews with that of the Palestinian Arab refugees. Thus the Jews of Iraq found themselves trapped. They had lost control of their own fate.

In conclusion, beginning in late 1948, the main question that was expected to decide the future of Iraqi Jewry was whether the Iraqi government would manage to stabilize the economy, gradually lift the restrictions and eliminate the discrimination. Most importantly, would it be able to restore the Jews' trust in their homeland? In 1949, it appeared that it would.

Nevertheless, in retrospect it is obvious that a web, though still concealed, was slowly being woven around the Iraqi Jewish community. One of the main weavers was the Hashemite regime, which for many years had encouraged anti-Zionist activity in Iraq as a means of deflecting feelings of discontent. When the State of Israel was proclaimed, the Hashemite regime found itself swept up by the demands of the impassioned nationalist masses and sent its troops to fight in the war against Israel. The Jews were persecuted only to appease the anti-Jewish masses, while incidentally filling the empty state coffers. Although the leaders of the Hashemite regime were well aware of the loyalty of the vast majority of Iraqi Jewry and knew that the Jews had been and still remained their allies, under the circumstances in 1948, removing the restraints on persecution of the Jews was perceived as the lesser of two evils. The fact that the persecutions were halted and the restrictions gradually rescinded at the end of the war confirms that the Iraqi authorities viewed the persecutions merely as a temporary measure forced on them by circumstances. But if the Iraqi government thought it could turn the clock back, it was mistaken. Several precedents set during the persecutions could not be ignored.

Firstly, the government actions had legitimized the allegations by the extreme right that the Jews were disloyal to Iraq, were Zionists and were aiding the Zionist enemy. Also, it had not been forgotten that the Jews had collaborated with the hated British overlords.

In addition, the issue of the Iraqi Jews was no longer a domestic Iraqi problem concerning relations between the majority and a minority, between Muslims and Jews, between supporters and opponents of the British; it was now part of a much broader problem: the Jewish-Arab conflict in the Middle East. Especially problematic was the linkage between the fate of the Jews, the fate of the Palestinian Arabs and the idea of a population transfer. In 1948 this linkage became acceptable to all the parties involved: Iraq, Israel, Britain and the United States. But there is no proof that the Iraqi government intended to force the Jews to leave; it seems to have used the issue mainly as a bargaining chip in its foreign policy. The Israeli government, too, which wanted the Iraqi Jews to come, did not consider the prospect of their immediate immigration realistic or even desirable. The British and the Americans refrained from urging a population transfer for fear that it would turn into a deportation with the Jews of Iraq as its victims. Nevertheless, it became generally recognized that, due to the Jewish-Palestinian Arab equation, the existence of the Iraqi Jewish community was liable to lead to recurrent tension, exacerbate the hostility between Israel and Iraq and jeopardize the welfare of the entire Middle East. Later the issue of Jewish property left in Iraq and frozen by the Iraqi government would be added to the equation.

Only the Iraqi Jews rejected both the equation and the idea of a population transfer. All they wanted was the restoration of quiet and the ability to live their lives as they had before. But like the Palestinian Arabs, their counterparts in the equation, they had lost control of their fate. Sooner or later the issue of their presence in Iraq, their loyalty and whether or not they belonged would come up again. In a retrospective analysis, it is hard to determine whether it was the Jewish-Palestinian Arab equation that sealed the fate of the Iraqi Jews and made their emigration a question of timing only. After all, aside from the repercussions of the Jewish-Arab conflict in Israel, there was the imminent national problem of the place of the Jewish minority among the Muslim majority in Iraq. But the intensiveness of the conflict and its repercussions throughout the Middle East linked the two issues inseparably. Under these circumstances, only the details of the Jews' departure remained in question: would it be large-scale or small-scale emigration? Would it be instant or gradual, orderly or punctuated by violent attacks? Would it be voluntary emigration or deportation? Would the emigrants be permitted to take their property with them or would they leave destitute? And finally, where would they go and what percentage of them would move to Israel?

NOTES

1. On the treaty and the reasons for opposition to it, see Stephen H.Longrigg, *Iraq, 1900 to 1950: A Political, Social, and Economic History* (London: Oxford University Press, 1953), pp. 344–7.
2. Among them were Arshad el-Omari, mayor of Baghdad during the Farhud in June 1941; Mohammed Mahdi Kuba, leader of the Istiqlal; and Jamil al-Madfa'i, who had a reputation for not being pro-British. Al-Sadr himself had been one of the leaders of the Arab revolt against the British in 1920.
3. Al-Pachachi was a former diplomat who had not been involved in Iraqi domestic affairs. A report by Y.A. (Yair Alkalai) of the Israeli Foreign Ministry described him as 'strongly anti-British, a radical pan-Arab nationalist, and a known pro-Egyptian'. See, 'The New Government in Iraq', 13 December 1949, State Archives, 2565/15.
4. Phebe Marr, *The Modern History of Iraq* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1985), p. 104.
5. Michael Eppel, *The Palestine Conflict in the History of Modern Iraq: Dynamics of Involvement, 1928–48* (London: Frank Cass, 1994), pp. 183–5.
6. Ibid., p. 281.
7. In the June 1948 parliamentary elections, the three parties in the centre and on the right won only 6 out of 138 seats. See Khadduri Majid, *Independent Iraq: A Study of Iraqi Politics since 1932* (London: Oxford University Press, 1951), p. 272; Longrigg, *Iraq*, p. 349.
8. For details, see the Foreign Ministry report 'News from Arab Countries', no. 5, 30 August 1948, Zisling Archives, container 9b, file 17, Hakibbutz Hameuhad Archives; Gabriel Bar, 'Ha-mashber ha-kaspi be-Iraq' [The financial crisis in Iraq], *Ha-mizrah he-hadash* [The new orient] 2(1) (January 1950).
9. S.Shegev (trans.), *Me-ahorei ha-pargod: Va'adat haqira parlamentarit al ha-milhama be-Yisrael* [Behind the curtain: Parliamentary commission of inquiry into the war in Israel] (Tel Aviv: Ma'archot, 1954), p. 60. This was the first time that the Iraqi legislature addressed Zionism explicitly, defined it as subversive activity and set heavy penalties for it. Although Zionist activity had been suppressed in the late 1920s and banned completely since the 1930s, that had been done by administrative regulations.
10. S.Longrigg, *Iraq*, p. 350.
11. Moshe Gat, *The Jewish Exodus from Iraq, 1948–1951* (London: Frank Cass, 1997), p. 35.

12. Foreign Ministry, 'News from Arab Countries', no. 5, 30 August 1948, Zisling Archives, container 9b, file 17, Hakibbutz Hameuhad Archives.
13. 'The Situation of Iraqi Jewry', 28 September 1948, State Archives, 2387/4.
14. Avraham Ben-Yaakov, *Yehudei Bavel* [The Jews of Babylonia], vol. 2: *Addenda and Supplements* (Jerusalem: Kiryat Sefer, 1980), p. 99.
15. Foreign Ministry, 'News from Arab Countries', 30 Auust 1948, based on a report in *al-Ahram*, Zisling Archives, container 9b, file 17, Hakibbutz Hameuhad Archives.
16. 'News from Middle Eastern Countries', no. 21, 31 October 1948, State Archives, 2565/15.
17. Baghdad to FO, 12 December 1949, PRO, FO371/75183 E15078.
18. Baghdad to FO, 3 March 1949, PRO, FO371/75182 E3653.
19. 'News from Middle Eastern Countries', 31 October 1948, based on a report in *al-Ahram*, 19 October 1948, State Archives, 2565/15.
20. See Dafna Zimhoni, 'Ha-reqa ha-medini le-mivtza aliyat yehudei Iraq' [The political background of the aliyah of Iraqi Jewry], in Y.Avishur (ed.), *Mehqarim be-toldot yehudei Iraq u-ve-tarbutam* [Studies in the history and culture of Iraqi Jewry], vol. 6 (Or Yehuda: Babylonian Jewry Heritage Center, 1991), pp. 90–1.
21. Ibid., p. 92.
22. Ibid., p. 13. The correspondence between the British missions in the Middle East was written in September-November 1949. See PRO, file FO371/75152.
23. Zimhoni, 'Ha-reqa ha-medini', p. 94.
24. Ibid., p. 96.
25. Nuri's July 1949 proposal for the exchange of 100,000 people from each side is reminiscent, in its timing and in the number stated, of an Israeli proposal brought up at the Lausanne Conference, in which Israel expressed willingness to let 100,000 Arab refugees back into Israel. The plan was finally discarded in August 1949. See Benny Morris, *Leidatah shel be'ayat ha-pelitim ha-palestinim 1947–1949* [The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947–1949] (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1992), pp. 355, 367–81.
26. PRO, FO371/75152, E1279, p. 6. The issue of property and compensation is mentioned in all the documents on the subject of transfer.
27. On the persecution of the communists, see H. Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq: A Study of Iraq's Old Landed and Commercial Classes and of Its Communists and Ba'thists and Free Officers* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978), pp. 567–71.
28. Y.Bar-Moshe, *Yetzi'at Iraq* [Exodus from Iraq] (Jerusalem: Va'ad Adat Haspharadim, 1977), p. 114.
29. In *Golim u-ge'ulim* [Exiles and redeemed], vol. 7: *Ha-otonomia shel ha-qehila ha-yehudit be-Baghdad* [The autonomy of the Jewish community in Baghdad] (Ramle: Geoula Synagogue Committee, 1979), p. 64, Avraham Twena notes the hanging of six communists but completely neglects to mention that two of them were Jews.
30. 'Persecution of the Jewish Community in Iraq', 16 October 1949, State Archives, 2563/8. A telegram from Berman [Iraq] to the Mossad (28 March 1949, Haganah Archives, 14/28) reports that a Jewish driver was charged with smuggling and was sentenced *in absentia* to hanging (*Niv*, no. 5, Tevet-Elul 1948/49, Haganah Archives, 14/427c).
31. Twena, *Ha-otonomia*, p. 109.
32. Kazzaz, *Ha-yehudim be-Iraq*, p. 279.
33. See *Gat, Jewish Exodus*, p. 35.
34. My perusal of hundreds of files on former Iraqi 'Prisoners of Zion' in Israel showed that the vast majority were in prison in 1948–1950, and almost all had been involved in Zionist or other illegal activity.
35. Baghdad to FO, 3 March 1949, PRO, FO371/75182 E3653. On the British stance vis-à-vis Israel and the Iraqi Jews, see *Gat, Jewish Exodus*, pp. 44–50.
36. Memo to the British embassy in Baghdad, 8 March 1949, PRO, FO371/75182 E3971.

37. ‘Report of the American Friends Service Committee on the Position of the Jewish Community in Iraq’, 30 March 1950, Haganah Archives, 14/428.
38. Asa, conference of Babylonian aliyah activists at Sede Nahum, 15 Sepember 1948, Hakibbutz Hameuhad Archives, division 2 foreign, container 1, file 10.
39. Memo from Rabbi Sasson Kadoorie, 28 October 1949, Haganah Archives, 14/29.
40. Twena, *Ha-otonomia,* p. 57.
41. *Niv,* no. 5, Tevet-Elul (January-September 1949), Haganah Archives.
42. Ibid.
43. Ibid. The issue apparently came out in September 1949.
44. Memo from the community president.
45. State Archives, 2392/12. Moshe Kol, Zorach Warhaftig, Arie Altman, Walter Eytan, Reuven Shiloah and David Ben-Gurion were at the meeting. Similar conclusions can be drawn from a report on the situation of Iraqi Jewry, 12 March 1949, Haganah Archives, 14/437.
46. ‘Points for Analyzing the Condition of the Jews of Arab Countries’, Yair Alkalai to the director of the Middle East Division in the Foreign Ministry 21 April 1949, State Archives, 2563/8.
47. On the complaints and reports, see Zimhoni, ‘Ha-reqa ha-medini’, p. 96.
48. Provisional Council of State, minutes, 29 July 1948, vol. 1, p. 8.
49. On this subject, see the telegram from Reuven Shiloah to Walter Eytan, 26 March 1949, *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel,* vol. 3 (Jerusalem, 1983), p. 489 (Hebrew), and English summary of the telegram in the Companion Volume, p. 87.
50. Knesset session, 30 March 1949, in *Divrei ha-Knesset,* vol. 1, pp. 266–75.
51. *Divrei ha-Knesset,* vol. 1, pp. 268, 269, 273. These statements may have been influenced by similar ideas mentioned around that time by Joseph B. Schechtman in his book *Population Transfers in Asia* (New York: Hallsby Press, 1949).

10
The Zionist Movement in Iraq during the Persecutions

PERSECUTION OF THE ZIONIST UNDERGROUND, AUTUMN 1949

The worst crisis in the history of the Iraqi Zionist movement began in October 1949 with an informer. Zionist sources relate that a communist, who had previously belonged to the Zionist movement, gave his interrogators the names of several Hehalutz counsellors. Dozens of Hehalutz members were soon arrested, including one who also belonged to the Haganah. The Hehalutz and Haganah institutions were disbanded, regular activity stopped and written material was hidden or destroyed. An 'emergency institution' comprising counsellors and emissaries was established to gather information and pass on instructions to the members. A three-man emergency committee (Naim Bekhor, David Shokher and Salim Khalifa) was also formed to persuade influential people to act.[1] Advance information obtained from the police enabled the movement to take wanted members out of their homes and to hide them. Soon there were about one hundred people in hiding.[2]

Two emissaries were working in Baghdad at the time, Rafael Zurani and David Ben-Meir. Zurani, a veteran of Hehalutz and the Haganah, one of the founders of Kibbutz Be'eri, and the kibbutz *mukhtar*, arrived in Iraq in June 1949 and took charge of the Haganah. Ben-Meir, also a Hehalutz veteran, had held various positions in the movement's central institutions before his aliyah in 1948. In May 1949 he returned to Iraq as an aliyah emissary The movement had been without an emissary since July 1948 (despite several suggestions and an attempt to dispatch an emissary), and the local counsellors who were running the activity were critical of the two men and skeptical of their prospects. The young Baghdadis reserved their adoration for emissaries from Israel, not those who had grown up in the ranks of Hehalutz in Iraq. But within a few months the two proved their ability. They were so successful that the members sent a request to Israel for more emissaries, 'and it doesn't matter if they're alumni of the movement; they won't be any less help than others… Emissaries for the movement are vitally needed.'[3] Two months later the idyll was shattered when they were put to the test of persecution.

The first reports on the crisis show that the members and emissaries were gripped by panic: 'We have lost our connections with the secret police… The matter has become very critical… The signs show that this may be a large-scale matter, with the imprisonment and torture encompassing hundreds and even thousands of Jews,' the emissaries reported on 12 October.[4] The next day—afraid that the detainees would break under torture and would lead the investigators to their weapons caches—they sent out a plea for help:

> In our opinion, without your urgent intervention…all the people in responsible positions in the movement and the Haganah will be captured and will suffer the same fate as the people in charge of the Communist party—hanging under the new law.[5]

As in previous cases, the emissaries asked the attorney Yosef el-Kabir for advice and help. El-Kabir told them what they had been told at the time of the 1944 'letter crisis': the Jewish community would not intervene on behalf of the underground, and they would have to solve the problem themselves. He even suggested that they turn in their comrades to the police.[6]

As more and more houses were searched and dozens of Hehalutz members and their relatives were arrested, the anxiety and despair intensified. The emissaries wrote:

> In our opinion, the way things are going, our main job will be to take the people in responsible positions in the movement and the Haganah to Israel, and with that we will conclude our task, if we are still alive.[7]

The emissaries' fear and despair are understandable given their grim situation. They were new to the job, locals and well known in the community, and their panic-stricken relatives were insisting that they go back to Israel and not endanger them. The emissaries knew that their cover as Iranians who had come from Bahrain was very weak and wouldn't stand up to interrogation, for the simple reason that they couldn't speak Farsi.

The emissaries' biggest and most painful problem had to do with leadership. When the crisis broke out, the counsellors refused to accept the absolute authority of the emissaries. After having spent a year running Hehalutz and Hehalutz Hatza'ir, with all their institutions and hundreds of members, they refused to cooperate with the two emissaries. The counsellors' criticism is reflected in their remarks to the secretariat of Hakibbutz Hameuhad when they moved to Israel a few months later:

> There are local and non-local emissaries. The local emissaries work hard, but in our illegal movement, a big movement that lived with a sense of inferiority due to the lack of non-local emissaries, it is not enough to have someone who has come back to Babylonia. The movement has to have a central, *cultured* person with initiative, with ability.

Another statement: 'It is not entirely true that we didn't have emissaries. There was someone from Baghdad who had returned from Israel, but there is the question of the quality of the emissary.' And another: 'Apparently, the local emissaries are not adequate in delicate situations.'[8] The criticism was true in principle; as leaders the emissaries did indeed exhibit weakness. Nevertheless, the members' preconceived distrust and their scepticism of the emissaries' leadership ability had a lot to do with creating this situation.

The despair of the fugitive Hehalutz members, their sense of an impending collapse, and their lack of trust in the emissaries impelled them to convene the secretariats of Hehalutz and the Haganah—a meeting that, by its very nature, constituted a grave danger. The participants decided on a suicide mission. According to one counsellor's testimony, 'All the members agreed that we had to take action, and we said: "Let me die with the

Philistines" [Judges 16:30]. We wanted to take revenge on the interrogators and torturers… Thoughts crept in about ignoring the emissaries' orders.'[9] The plan was to blow up the building that housed the secret police and to take up arms against the Jewish community leadership—a plan that is understandable only in the context of the absolute values, and perhaps also the Holocaust heritage, that they had learned from the Zionist movement. Ben-Meir and Zurani, horrified, rushed to pacify the members. The next day the Mossad sent an urgent telegram rejecting the proposed action and promising assistance. The emissaries were told: 'Do everything to persuade the members that the use of arms now would only exacerbate the situation.'[10] Instead, the emissaries suggested smuggling the fugitives out of the country, thereby thwarting the Iraqi police, ending the risk of discovery of the underground movement and rescuing the people in charge. The proposal was first made in a telegram to the Mossad during the second week of the crisis, and groups of counsellors left for Iran shortly thereafter.[11] When the emissaries first suggested the idea on 16 October, the Mossad told them to send the fugitive counsellors out of the country or rent a house for them, as they saw fit.[12] But in the heat of the crisis, the people wanted by the authorities were not the only ones taken out of the country; others were also sent to Iran, including about 60 counsellors, instructors and commanders—a total of about 250 people.

A month later, on 16 November the secretariat of Hakibbutz Hameuhad decided to forbid the emissaries to smuggle the activists out. The notice from the Mossad was phrased as a recommendation: 'Continued removal of the counsellors will empty the movement of all activists. In each case, consider the possibility of hiding the people until the wrath passes.'[13] But by then the activists were already in Iran or on their way there.

The prevailing atmosphere of fear and confusion emerges from a letter from one of the Hehalutz counsellors:

> Worries and profound agony reverberate in the mind. Has the time come to throw off the yoke and flee? Now of all times? But who will guarantee that, if we don't manage to flee now, we won't be trapped when the movement falls apart? And what will happen? Yes, it's very hard to break away from the movement, especially these days, leaving comrades to their terrible torments in jail, and to part, perhaps forever, from our comrades who are continuing in the path. But we had to flee; the capital was like a hot, raging hell.[14]

The activists' aliyah was the subject of bitter, protracted debate among the people and organizations involved. The emissaries were accused of having been too quick to send the counsellors away,[15] but they insisted that their decision had been influenced by the difficulty of finding hiding places for them.[16] It should be noted that the first to be taken out of the country were those who knew where the weapons were hidden and those known to be the objects of police searches.[17] The other activists who were smuggled out through Iran left after the emergency institution, made up of representatives of the counsellors, had submitted activists' names to the emissaries and the emissaries authorized their departure.

Mordechai Ben-Porat, an aliyah emissary who arrived toward the end of the crisis, dispatched his own criticism to Israel:

> The counselors from the Haganah and the movement who were removed made a bad impression on the entire membership of the Haganah and the movement. The members are asking: if the counsellor won't stay in times like these, when will he?[18]

Complaints were also heard in the institutions of Hakibbutz Hameuhad, the parent movement of the Iraqi Hehalutz movement. This was a sensitive, charged issue that had troubled the kibbutz movement since its emissaries returned from occupied Europe in 1939/40. But the criticism was motivated by political factors, too—concerns about the status of Hakibbutz Hameuhad in the Iraqi Zionist movement. Hakibbutz Hameuhad was afraid that it might lose its dominant status in the Iraqi Hehalutz movement, especially given the political and ideological conflict in Israel between Mapai and Mapam.

In the end, the counsellors did not return to Iraq, and we do not know of any attempts to send them back. It should be noted that any comparison between the return of the emissaries from Europe and the smuggling out of the Iraqi counsellors is not relevant. This was not a matter of abandoning the Iraqi Jews to their fate, because the persecutions were directed not against the Jews but against the Zionist movement alone. Capturing the counsellors was liable to be catastrophic for the hundreds of families connected to the movement, and perhaps for the entire Jewish community

However, smuggling the counsellors out did not put an immediate end to the Iraqi police investigations. Caught in this tight spot, the emissaries appealed to two potential sources of help: they demanded that the Israeli government do all it could to save them, and especially that it arrange for international pressure to be exerted on the Iraqi government; and they appealed to the leaders of the Jewish community to try to put an end to the investigations and imprisonments. Their aim was twofold: to obtain the backing and assistance of the community leaders and to corroborate the Israeli claim that this was antisemitic persecution targeting Jews just for being Jews. These tactics are expressed in the testimony of one of the Hehalutz counsellors:

> We heard about the Israeli protests and the Iraqi denial. We wanted to prove the truth to the whole world… We wanted to use the community for this purpose… We explained to the Jews that this had nothing to do with the movement and that all Jews could anticipate a cruel fate.[19]

Or, as Rafael Zurani put it: 'We decided to use these persecutions to publicize the fact that the persecutions are against the Jews and not against Zionism.'[20]

They appealed to the community leaders on 16 October 1949, towards the beginning of the crisis. If the investigation was halted right away, the community would be spared terrible suffering. Their request was turned down.[21] Efforts at persuasion were intensified. A few days later it was reported that 'all the Jews are in an uproar and are demanding a day of fasting and penitential prayers', and that the community president, Rabbi Sasson Kadoorie, and several other leaders, objected for fear of a government backlash.[22] The emergency committee and other activists met with some of the community leaders, including Senator Ezra Menahem Daniel, MP Salman Shina and Heskel Shemtob, a wealthy, influential merchant whose son belonged to the Haganah, and convinced them of the need to help. The reasoning that tipped the scales was twofold: first, the

underground had a lot of weapons, and if they were seized the result would be catastrophic for the Jewish community; second, every family had someone in the underground. If the arrests and tortures continued, they would encompass the entire community. The community leaders were warned that if they did not act it would be their responsibility. Their request that the weapons be dumped in the river was not even brought up. In the end they became reluctant partners.[23] On 22 October, the emissaries reported that, 'after desperate efforts', the community president had agreed to hold a day of fasting and penitential prayers on 25 October. Special radio broadcasts, including penitential prayers, were ordered from Israel in preparation for the fast.

Even before the fast day, a demonstration by women was organized. Dozens of mothers and other female relatives of detainees gathered outside the office of the community president and demanded that he take action on behalf of their detained relations. The report by the Mossad emissaries gave little detail: 'The screams of dozens of mothers were heard today in the office of the head of the community…'[24] The next day it was reported that the demonstration had set out for the main street of Baghdad and that some of the participants had been arrested.[25] Ten days later, in a reply to an inquiry by the Mossad, the emissaries admitted that the community president had been taken to the hospital after the demonstration. They denied, however, that he had been beaten by the demonstrators and insisted that the demonstrators had merely 'pulled off his turban'.[26] This demonstration, it seems, was held without the emissaries' knowledge. However, the counsellors in the emergency institution not only knew about it but were involved in organizing it.[27]

There was really no logical reason for this demonstration, since the community leaders had already agreed to the fast day The reason for it was emotional; it was meant to meet the needs of its organizers—people from Hehalutz. It should be borne in mind that the community president was not popular in the Jewish community, especially among the common people. For years Hehalutz had fostered a negative image of him—as a traitor and a collaborator, a puppet of the authorities, a persecutor who endangered the movement. Now, in a time of crisis, he fell victim to this image. In the year and a half since the persecution of the Iraqi Jews began, the community president had not been conspicuously active. His meetings with top government officials had been held quietly and had no impact in the Jewish street. He had never brought up the overall problem of the Jewish community, hoping, as he testified in a memorandum dated 28 October 1949, that 'ultimately matters [would] return to their natural state'.[28] But even the fast seems not to have satisfied the young Zionists; they sought more—personal intercession by the community president to free the prisoners. This can be concluded from a report by the British ambassador in Baghdad:

> About 150 Jews assembled yesterday morning near the chief rabbi's house and asked him to head a delegation to protest the recent detentions… When he refused, he was taken forcibly by the demonstrators and compelled to accompany them. On the main street they were dispersed by the police, who arrested 15 people. The rabbi was taken to the Meir Elias Jewish hospital.[29]

The fast day on 25 October was a success. The community institutions and members stayed away from work, a large crowd gathered in the synagogues, and 'the outcry was tremendous and awesome'.[30] The participation of the entire Jewish community in an action on behalf of the Zionist movement was a major milestone in the history of the Iraqi Jewish community and its relationship with Zionism and Israel. How can we explain the Jews' willingness to identify openly with the Zionist underground while the emergency laws were still in force? How can we explain this total reversal of the realism and caution that had until then characterized the Jews? It is understandable that those associated with the Zionist movement would be involved. They were afraid that they would be the next victims of the police investigation. But the solidarity encompassed many more of the population.

Various testimonies sent to the Mossad at the time indicate that the Jews believed that what was happening was the abuse of 'children'—teenage boys and girls—who were guilty only of the 'crime' of studying Hebrew. The impression was that this fate awaited every Jew, and that the arrests were arbitrary and random. Literature circulated by Hehalutz reinforced this perception:

> In the name of Arabism and Islam, behind the screen of nationalism and the slogans, and on grounds of Communism and Zionism, Nuri al-Said is acting…to tighten the noose around the Jews in Iraq through humiliation, beatings, and all sorts of tortures, for no wrongdoing or sin other than being Jewish… The Jew in Iraq knows not what the next day will bring—whether he will remain a prisoner outside of jail or will be informed by the police that he is a Communist, a Zionist, or an infidel or is harming and sabotaging the general security.[31]

Hence, while the underground was demanding assistance from the community leaders by warning that the arms stores might be discovered, in its appeal to the general public it depicted the imprisonments as anti-Jewish persecution and a direct continuation of the persecutions that had beset the community since May 1948. The exaggerated rumours of abuse—although some abuse was real—further fanned the flames of the emotional storm.

Moreover, the memory of the Farhud in June 1941 had not vanished, and fear of a recurrence reappeared whenever there were signs of mounting antisemitism. Since May 1948 the Jews had lived in constant tension. The day-to-day problems were financial, but the crisis was emotional and psychological. Many people had lost their faith in being a part of the Iraqi state and society, and it seemed as if the chances of survival were becoming smaller and smaller. Presumably, the recent precedent of the mass murder of European Jewry influenced their interpretation of events in Iraq. It seems that frustration, cumulative anger, despair, and, most importantly, fear of the future were the factors that motivated the Jews to cooperate with the underground.

Additionally Israeli political achievements and battlefield victories heightened the Iraqi Jews' enthusiasm and support for the Zionist underground. Many people listened to Israeli radio broadcasts. The Zionist movement increased its activity in the Jewish street, working in the Jewish schools and distributing leaflets. On the first anniversary of Israeli independence, many Jews celebrated in their homes, following instructions from the

movement. Presumably the movement's increased strength also had an impact on the Jews' willingness to cooperate with it.

Meanwhile, the community leaders launched a series of meetings with officials in the Iraqi administration. On 23 October 1949, the day of the women's demonstration, Jewish representatives (including Rabbi Kadoorie, former MP Avraham Haim, Heskel Shemtob, and Eliyahu Tawfiq) met with Deputy Prime Minister Omar Nadmi. According to a British report, Nadmi claimed that evidence had been discovered of an active, organized Zionist movement in Iraq and said it was the government's duty to investigate. He said that he had personally ordered the police to remain within the confines of the law. On 28 October, Nadmi told the British ambassador that he had promised the Jewish delegation a judicial investigation headed by a British judge in any case in which the Jews had requested and he expressed willingness to let Jewish doctors examine the detainees.[32] The delegation demanded the repeal of the restrictions on travel abroad and on the sale of real estate, an end to the dismissals from the Civil Service on national grounds, and the elimination of the discrimination against Jews in admission to institutions of higher education.[33] Apparently, the restrictions on the Jewish community disturbed the delegation no less, and perhaps even more, than the persecution of the Zionists did. They realized that they could only break up the cooperation between the general public and the Zionist underground if they showed achievements that affected the community as a whole.

A few days later, Rabbi Kadoorie sent a memorandum to Nadmi, reiterating the complaints brought up by the delegation. He began his memo by noting that the Jews' anxiety was not just due to the recent arrests, the way they had been carried out or the violence that had accompanied them. Although these factors had magnified the anxiety, it was caused by the restrictions that had been in effect for the past 18 months. Although the authorities had promised the Jewish dignitaries that the abolition of martial law, which was expected in the near future, would ease travel abroad and the sale of real estate, they did not promise any immediate change that could be presented to the agitated Jewish community as an accomplishment. Rabbi Kadoorie also met with the defence minister, Shakir al-Wadi, and asked him to issue passports to Jews. According to the Mossad emissaries, al-Wadi refused.[34]

What Rabbi Kadoorie did was too little, too late and too discreet. His two decades as community president had been characterized by aloofness and arrogance vis-à-vis the Jewish masses. He was cut off from the hearts of the common people and was unaware of the effects of modernization and westernization on the various classes in the community. It was now clear that the Zionist movement was not just a national and political movement but a social one, and as such it represented a new generation and a new social class that sought political expression within the community. The young people from the middle class, who had no access to power, influence and political mobility due to the oligarchic structure of the community leadership, found an alternative in Hehalutz and the Haganah. It soon became clear that members of the underground were trying to depose Rabbi Kadoorie and replace him with Heskel Shemtob, who was willing to cooperate with them.

The next action by the Hehalutz members was to organize a meat boycott. The unmistakable involvement of people from the Jewish underground in planning the boycott was not mentioned in the report to the Mossad: 'The matter originated in a

community awakening. We have no hand in it.'[35] Indeed, neither the emissaries nor the leading Haganah commanders were involved in organizing the boycott. It was an initiative of Hehalutz counsellors and members, who appealed to slaughterers and the general public to refrain from buying meat as an act of protest against the community president. As long as the tax on kosher meat was the main component of the community budget, there was concern that the community would not be able to maintain its institutions. The results surpassed all expectations. The boycott was widespread and lasted for three weeks (19 November-10 December 1949). Its significance was political and economic—an expression of lack of confidence in the community leadership. Rabbi Kadoorie resigned and the secular council was disbanded. 'The community dignitaries are very disconcerted,' the emissaries reported, 'They have contacted us and are asking that the entire community be influenced to stop the boycott. We have not yet decided on our position.'[36] The boycott continued. When it became clear that the government and some of the community dignitaries sought to restore Rabbi Kadoorie to office, the emissaries—for the first time—expressed a clear position: 'We are opposed to the restoration of the head of the community. From today on we will direct the boycott. We are conducting negotiations regarding the community dignitaries.'[37] The Mossad's reaction was sharp: 'Continuing the boycott will cause the disintegration of the community and will harm and complicate the Jews' affairs. It is therefore important that the boycott stop. In general, you should avoid intervening in internal affairs.'[38]

As in other, similar, cases the Mossad objected vehemently to interference by the Zionist movement in Jewish community affairs. The activism of the underground members frightened the level-headed Mossad people, who were engaged in a political and diplomatic campaign to stop the persecution in Iraq. But the Mossad did not realize that the emissaries had no control over the boycott. The members of Hehalutz refused to obey the emissaries' orders to stop it, as we can see from a letter by a counsellor, dated 10 June 1950: What a great benefit we gained by not listening to the emissaries when they told the Jews to stop the meat strike, which was an expression of their solidarity and their passing a test.'[39]

After losing control of the movement, the emissaries were swept up by the current. This current was led by young people—members and counsellors from the lower middle class in Baghdad—who had rebelled both against the community leaders and against the emissaries. They were a grassroots, anti-establishment force, and they used their power for social objectives. They did not consider themselves bound by the Mossad, and their willingness to obey it and the emissaries was limited.

Israel was far away, and the Mossad was essentially trying to exert its authority by remote control. It quickly became clear that the Mossad was powerless to force Hehalutz to listen to it, and that leadership had been taken over by the activist forces that had an influence in the Jewish street. Their influence was the result of their activism, their fervour, and their radicalism, which represented rebellion against acceptance of the Jewish fate. The activism of Iraqi Jewish youngsters in the 1940s was nothing new. It was what had propelled them into the various underground movements—Hehalutz, revisionism, and the Communist Party—in the first place. Even within Hehalutz, members had demonstrated many examples of social and political activism, generally harnessed and channelled in the Zionist direction: into clandestine aliyah, work as counsellors, or political activity in the community (for instance, during the visit of the

Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry in March 1946). But during this crisis there was no one with the power to restrain them. The vacuum that developed as a result of the weakness of the traditional leadership and of the Zionist leadership made the Jewish street susceptible to the influence of the activists.

On 10 December 1949, the government accepted Rabbi Kadoorie's resignation, and Heskel Shemtob was chosen to take his place. The arrests and persecutions stopped then, too, since the investigation had reached a dead end. After two months, the police were holding two Hehalutz counsellors, one of whom was also a member of the Haganah and the other a commander. Neither admitted to this under interrogation. In addition, dozens of Hehalutz members and their relatives had been arrested; others who could not help with the investigation were released. The police had not discovered anything about the Haganah and had not found the weapons. But the arrest of innocent people had stirred up passions in the Jewish community, exposed Iraq to international criticism and political pressure, and blackened the country's reputation in the West. The gamble that the leaders of the underground, the emissaries and the counsellors in the emergency committee had taken in appealing to the community leaders seems to have paid off. The Zionist underground was saved. Moreover, the weakness and despair proved to be a source of power. At the end of the crisis it became clear that the underground was now a political force within the Jewish community; moreover, it had the power to spur a broad segment of the Jewish population to action and could even replace the leadership. These revelations would be of great importance in the coming months.

ISRAELI POLICY VIS-À-VIS THE PERSECUTION OF IRAQI JEWRY

The persecutions that began in May 1948 took place concurrently with the fighting in Israel. Throughout the war, while the survival of the new state was not yet assured, Israel did not respond directly to the anti-Jewish persecution in Iraq: not only because it was weak and preoccupied with a war of survival, and not just on the assumption that the Iraqi government had no interest in anti-Jewish riots and that the Jews were in no danger of annihilation, and not even because the persecutions came as no surprise. The main reason was that Israel was aware that there were almost no practical steps it could take to help these Jews and that declarations and complaints would only make matters worse. Therefore, Israel's approach was primarily tactical: the government claimed that the Jews of Iraq, as Iraqi citizens, were entitled to full equality, and that any harm done to them was a violation of their civil rights. Any direct Israeli intervention might contradict this declared stance and hurt the Jews: 'Our intervention would give the Iraqis an excuse for accusing the Jews there of ties and collaboration with us,' said a Foreign Ministry memorandum. The conclusion was that the Iraqi Jews should be left to solve their own problems and that assistance should be provided through international Jewish organizations.[40]

This policy was based on a Foreign Ministry assessment that the rumours about the situation of the Jews in Arab countries were exaggerated. The situation in Egypt 'is not a danger to the lives of the Jews', and 'there are no grounds for harsh complaints against the governments of Syria and Lebanon'. Iraq was thought to be 'the only country in

which the Jews' situation appears extremely grave', but even there it was not as bad as might have been expected.[41] Nevertheless, Israel made it clear in principle that it had a definite interest in the Jews of Arab countries and linked a peace settlement and resolution of the refugee problem with the situation of the Jewish communities in Arab countries.[42] For Iraq, this policy meant additional emissaries and the allocation of resources for underground activity. When clandestine aliyah via Iran was shown to be an option, Israel gave its backing and support to developing and expanding this activity. This involved extensive diplomatic efforts to gain permission for the refugees to stay in the transit camp in Teheran until they were flown to Israel, and to prevent their deportation back to Iraq. The problem was finally solved in March 1950, when Iran recognized Israel.[43] This operation required a substantial investment to finance the emigration, the transit camp, and the flight to Israel. The financial problem was resolved when the Joint Distribution Committee became involved.

The crisis in Iraq in the autumn of 1949 forced Israel to reconsider its policy vis-à-vis Iraqi Jewry. On 12 October after hearing over the wireless of the arrest of Hehalutz members, the Mossad launched a campaign to rescue the Iraqi Zionist underground. It was clear that Israeli involvement in Iraq had to be kept secret at all costs. Proposals were drawn up for action in three realms: publicity in the international press; diplomatic activity in the West, especially the United States, including demonstrations outside Iraqi missions and economic pressure on Iraq; and hints that Israeli Arabs were hostages and threats to undermine stability in the Middle East.[44]

Although these proposals ran counter to the policy that Israel had maintained since independence, the gravity of the situation, in light of the panicky telegrams from Iraq and descriptions of cruel tortures, prompted the Mossad to adopt an emergency policy. This decision was taken amidst weighty fears, because it meant an aggressive anti-Iraqi policy, some exposure of sources of information and perhaps even disclosure of the ties between Israel and Iraqi Jewry. The Mossad convinced the Foreign Ministry that this tactic should be adopted. This fundamental turning point is attested to by a note preserved in one of the files on Iraq in the Middle East Division of the Foreign Ministry: 'We have decided that Israel will openly defend the rights of the Jews in Arab countries.'[45]

The Mossad played a central role in the Israeli opposition to the persecution of the underground in Iraq. It was the only source of contact with Iraq and the channel whereby instructions, advice, information and encouragement were conveyed. However, the emissaries were often allowed to use their discretion and to make decisions in accordance with circumstances. The Mossad worked in part through the Foreign Ministry and maintained direct contact with Israeli missions abroad, Mossad representatives and Foreign Ministry personnel. It also made use of the Israeli media through the good offices of press spokesman Moshe Perlman and provided information on a daily basis about events in Iraq. When this campaign encountered hostility, denials and counteraccusations, the Mossad contacted Israeli representatives abroad, vouched for the complete accuracy of its information and urged them to boost their activity and not to lose hope.

But the information was not accurate. The persecutions in Iraq in the autumn of 1949 targeted members of Hehalutz, whereas the Mossad described them as anti-Jewish persecutions. Israeli representatives circulated detailed reports on the economic, social and judicial persecution of the Iraqi Jews and oppression with respect to their civil status, finally doing what they had not done during the many months of persecution in 1948.[46]

According to these reports, the 1949 persecutions were the latest link in a chain of persecution that had begun in May 1948, and this new link had begun not in October but a month before, with the arrest of Jews in the Kurdish mountain town of Khanaqin and the arrest of worshippers including, on unclear charges, the community rabbi, in the Amara synagogue on Yom Kippur 1949. Although these incidents did in fact occur, they were part of the Iraqi police campaign against the smuggling of Jews to Iran, which intensified in the second half of 1949. The purpose of linking these events to the October arrests was to reinforce the claim that the arrests were anti-Jewish and not specifically anti-Zionist. Moreover, the Israelis complained bitterly of British involvement in the persecutions, although I found no evidence of such involvement in the documentary material. The Israelis also alleged that Prime Minister Nuri al-Said had resolved to expel the Jews from Iraq and confiscate their property. What did the Mossad and the Foreign Ministry do? Reports of imprisonment, torture, and so on, were sent to the United States in the guise of information obtained directly from authoritative, non-Israeli sources in Iraq. Foreign Ministry personnel met with British and American diplomats, told them of the Israeli government's concern, and asked their governments to intervene.[47]

On 23 October 1949, the Israeli government issued a statement denouncing the actions of the Iraqi government and accusing it of 'an outburst of benighted jealousy and racial hatred', and a 'malicious violation of human rights'. Israel warned that these actions were liable 'to again fan the flames of the conflict in the Middle East' while it was trying to improve the status of the Arab minority in Israel. The 'symmetry' between the Palestinian Arabs and the Iraqi Jews had switched direction, with the former now being portrayed as hostages. The statement also mentioned the Israeli request for urgent intervention by Britain and the US. The purpose of the statement was to make the western powers and Iraq aware of the gravity of the problem and to warn of a deterioration of security throughout the region. It is hard to know how serious the Israeli warning was. Quite likely, given the unstable atmosphere in the Middle East in the autumn of 1949, some people took it seriously. In any case, it put the problem of Iraqi Jewry on the two powers' agenda and made it clear that, if the present situation continued, it was liable to trigger renewed violence. Furthermore, the wording of the statement indicates a new course of action for depicting the causes of the persecution: rather than persecution for no reason, as had been claimed before, it was now said to be persecution of Jews who wished to escape from the oppressive regime in the hope of reaching Israel. 'As a consequence of these attempts, the government's wrath was poured out on the Iraqi Jewish community in all its fury.'[48] This tactic added a new dimension to the Israeli charge: it was closer to the truth than the previous claims and, more importantly, it pointed to emigration from Iraq as a solution to the problem.

The Israeli government statement was printed widely in the major newspapers in the United States and France. Three days later, the Government Press Office arranged a meeting with a 'witness' who described, using Holocaust terminology how masses of Jews were trucked to an unknown place. It turns out that this 'witness' was none other than the aliyah emissary Shmuel Moriah, who had left Iraq in December 1948![49]

Within a few days, it became clear that the picture presented by Israel was not entirely accurate. The Iraqi government denied that there was any persecution, and Iraqi diplomats in the West accused Israel of spreading false allegations.[50] The British government refused to intervene; the Americans maintained that there were fewer

detainees than had been reported and that they had been arrested on charges of violating Iraqi law.[51] The French minister in Baghdad, also reported that these were not anti-Jewish pogroms but actions against 'Jewish terrorists'—'groups of Jews, most of them armed, who form part of a Jewish organization whose function includes smuggling Iraqi Jews to Israel'.[52] British diplomats in Washington reported with undisguised glee the hard-line reaction of the Americans, their opposition to bringing up the matter in the UN and their warnings to Israel that its actions were leading to grave allegations against the Jews of Iraq and were creating precisely the situation that Israel was trying to prevent.[53]

On 3 November, a delegation of Jewish leaders met with George McGhee, US Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs. They admitted that some Jews in Iraq had broken Iraqi laws but claimed that these laws violated the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and principles of civil liberties.[54]

From the very beginning, the Israeli allegations surprised officials from the British Foreign Office and the US State Department. The British ambassador in Baghdad noted that the Israeli propaganda was doing a disservice to Iraqi Jewry. In summing up the affair on 12 December 1949, he wrote:

> All this [persecution] has taken place since the application of martial law in May 1948, and it is hard to understand why the Zionist organizations abroad are limiting themselves to the jailings …of October 1949… This episode by itself does not seem to be of great importance. Sixty Jews have been arrested altogether…[55]

The officials assumed that Israel was well aware that its allegations were endangering the Iraqi Jews, and the only explanation they could come up with was that Israel was being guided by political and economic motivations and was attempting to boost fundraising in the United States by diverting attention from the bad impression caused by its treatment of the Arab refugees. A few officials claimed that this was part of Israel's struggle against a Syrian-Iraqi alliance.[56] It never seems to have occurred to either the British or the Americans that the Iraqi police had uncovered just the tip of the iceberg and that actual Zionist activity was much broader and more dangerous. Therefore they could not understand Israel's motives, intense anxiety and willingness to take the risk involved in the campaign of allegations.

When the Mossad realized that its diplomatic efforts had failed, it went on the offensive, seeking to influence American public opinion. Israeli diplomats in New York were asked to organize mass demonstrations outside Iraqi missions; friends of Israel were asked to undermine Iraqi efforts to obtain loans from American banks;[57] and Israeli diplomats in the eastern bloc were given instructions, too. In the end, this all proved unnecessary, because the persecutions in Iraq ended around that time, and the anti-Iraqi campaign by the Israeli government petered out.

We have no explanation for the cessation of the persecutions by the Iraqi government. Perhaps the investigation had reached a dead end, or perhaps the mobilization of the Iraqi Jewish community helped. Presumably, the Israeli government efforts had some impact. The demonstrations in New York angered Iraqi representatives and elicited fear of a reaction by mobs in the streets of Baghdad and the outbreak of riots. Iraq was probably also worried that its requests for desperately needed loans from the West would be

rejected, or at least delayed. In any case, the action demonstrated to the Iraqis how much support Zionism had in the United States. Antisemitic stereotypes about 'world Jewry' may have made the Jewish action much more worrisome than it should have been. Thus the exaggerated fear of Jewish power quite likely played a part in putting an end to the persecutions.

When the crisis ended, it proved to have had major ramifications for the Iraqi Jewish community. First, the problem of Iraqi Jewry was now on the agenda of the great powers, which realized that it was a problem that had to be solved. We have no information about any activity by the powers in this respect, but we can assume that they had something to do with ending the persecution. They may also have had an impact later on Iraqi policy vis-à-vis the Jewish exodus to Iran and perhaps even on the solution offered by Iraq in March 1950 in the form of the Renunciation of Citizenship Law.[58]

The Israeli government's handling of the affair also had a major impact on the emigration of Iraqi Jewry During the campaign against Iraq, the idea of a population exchange between Iraqi Jews and Palestinian Arab refugees came up again (see chapter 9). Israel was initially reluctant to accept a population exchange, because the Jews' property would have to remain in Iraq in exchange for the Arab refugees' property in Israel. From October to November, the matter was again brought up with Israel, and this time Israel had no choice but to agree.[59] The news was conveyed to the emissaries in Iraq in order to hearten them with the knowledge that the Israeli government was interested in the immediate immigration of Iraqi Jewry. Other ramifications had to do with the smuggling of Jews to Iran. During the persecutions, Iran became a main transit point for Iraqi Jewry Although the route had been in use since December 1948, only in the autumn of 1949 did it become possible to smuggle out scores of people every month. In Teheran, the emigrants were assembled in a transit camp set up on the grounds of the Jewish cemetery, and from there they were flown to Israel. In mid-December, after the Iraqi emergency laws were repealed and penalties were lightened, hundreds of Iraqi Jews or even more began passing through Iran each month. The number of emigrants snowballed; within a few months Jews were leaving Iraq for Israel en masse. No less impor-tant was the change in the Zionist movement's stature in the Jewish street. It had become a social force that could take advantage of the frustration, despair, worry and fear in the Jewish community and channel them to achieve its political objective: replacement of the leadership of the Baghdad Jewish community. Despite its ad hoc nature, the alliance between the Zionist movement and the Jewish community made the movement an important political force in the community. The selection of Shemtob, the movement's candidate of choice, as the deputy president of the community augured the continuation, and even increased momentum, of Zionist involvement in community affairs.

Finally, although Iraqi Jewry had been perceived by Israelis, even before this, as a persecuted community, it was now portrayed by Israel as a community on the verge of annihilation, with its people fleeing for their lives and having no place of refuge but Israel. This portrayal, though intended to serve the struggle against Iraq, also moulded and fixed the image of Iraqi Jewry in the Israeli consciousness. Clearly, Israel had to open its gates to these Jews, but in so doing it exacted a high price. They would be received not as proud immigrants but as cast-out refugees who owed a debt of gratitude to their rescuers. This image fitted in well with the patronizing arrogance that had characterized the Yishuv's attitude toward Iraqi Jewry in the past.

NOTES

1. Yosef Meir, *Me-ever la-midbar: Ha-mahteret ha-halutzit be-Iraq* [Beyond the Desert: The Pioneering Underground in Iraq] (Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defense, 1973), p. 180.
2. Ibid., p. 181.
3. National secretariat of Hehalutz in Iraq to the Babylonian Liaison Bureau in Israel, 10 August 1949, CZA, S86/79.
4. Haganah Archives, 14/29.
5. Berman to Mossad, Da'at, and Nadad, 'super-urgent', 13 October 1949, Haganah Archives, 14/29.
6. Testimony of Zurani, 4 September 1949, BJHC; interview with David Shokher et al., 30 November 1989, BJHC. In a meeting with Shokher, Ezra Menahem Daniel and Yosef el-Kabir advised him to dump the weapons in the river.
7. Berman to Mossad, 21 October 1949, Haganah Archives, 14/29.
8. Meeting with the Babylonian immigrant action committee, 28 December 1949, Hakibbutz Hameuhad secretariat, Hakibbutz Hameuhad Archives, division 1b, container 8, file 36.
9. Remarks by Ezra, Hakibbutz Hameuhad secretariat, 16 November 1949, Hakibbutz Hameuhad Archives, division 1b, container 8, file 36. David Shokher, a member of the Haganah and the emergency committee, who attended the meeting, termed the counsellors' plan 'fantasy' and noted that they had mentioned Warsaw ghetto-type suicide. According to Shokher, the committee persuaded Zurani to inform the group that the initiative had been vetoed in Israel, and Zurani's announcement put an end to the argument. Interview with Shokher, Bekhor and Shaul, 30 November 1949, BJHC.
10. Mossad to Berman, 22 October 1949, no. 22, 24, Haganah Archives, 14/29.
11. The subject is mentioned in the following telegrams: Berman to Mossad, 16 October 1949, Haganah Archives, 14/29; 25 October 1949, 28 October 1949, Haganah Archives, 14/29.
12. Mossad to Berman, 18 October 1949, Haganah Archives, 14/29.
13. Mossad to Berman, 16 November 1949, Haganah Archives, 14/30.
14. Elimelech S. [Avraham Sa'ad], 'When We Crossed the Border', newsletter marking the completion of training of the Babylonian seed group at Ma'oz Haim, 19 October 1950, Hakibbutz Hameuhad Archives, division 2 foreign, container 3.
15. See Hakibbutz Hameuhad secretariat, 16 November 1949, 28 December 1949, Hakibbutz Hameuhad Archives, division 1b, container 8, file 36.
16. Berman to Mossad, 30 November 1949, Haganah Archives, 14/30.
17. Conversation with Rafael Zurani.
18. Dror to Czerbiniski [Carmil], 30 December 1949, Haganah Archives, 14/30.
19. Remarks by Ezra, Hakibbutz Hameuhad secretariat, 16 November 1949, Hakibbutz Hameuhad Archives, division 1b, container 8, file 36.
20. Minutes of meeting of the Babylonian Liaison Bureau, Palmahim, 25 November 1950, Hehalutz Archives, BJHC.
21. Berman [Iraq] to Mossad, 16 October 1949, Haganah Archives, 14/29.
22. Berman [Iraq] to Mossad, 17 October 1949, 21 October 1949, Haganah Archives, 14/29. Again: 'The Jews are in an uproar, but the people from the community are too afraid to do anything.'
23. Salman Shina described his astonishment when the Haganah members told him of the weapons and the danger of their discovery: 'I was astonished to hear this, and I wondered: how did we come to be ruled by youths?… I had no choice but to accede to their request' He also quoted Senator Ezra Daniel: '"How will I speak with the rulers anymore?" Ezra cried in a voice full of despair. "I have always cried out and protested against the persecutions, and I have already submitted a written protest to the King's bureau. If the weapons are discovered, what will we do?"' After a discussion by the community dignitaries, including the president, it was decided to proclaim the day of fasting and protest. Salman Shina, *Mi-Bavel le-*

Tziyyon: Zikhronot ve-hashqafot [From Babylonia to Zion: Memories and Outlooks] (Tel Aviv: n.p., 1955), pp. 146–9.
24. Berman to Mossad, 23 October 1949, Haganah Archives, 14/29.
25. Berman to Mossad, 24 October 1949, Haganah Archives, 14/19.
26. Berman to Mossad, 4 November 1949, Haganah Archives, 14/29.
27. Conversation with Rafael Zurani.
28. 28 October 1949, Haganah Archives, 14/427. Twenty people, including some innocent bystanders, were arrested at the demonstration, and they were sentenced to one to three years in prison. See 13 November 1949, Haganah Archives, 14/19.
29. Baghdad to FO, 24 October 1949, PRO, FO371/75182.
30. 25 and 26 October 1949, Haganah Archives, 14/29.
31. 'Topic of the Day: The Persecution of the Jews in Iraq', 24 October 1949, Haganah Archives, 14/29. For another pamphlet accusing the Iraqi government of turning the Iraqi Jews into scapegoats for political failures, see *Kol Ha-tahana* (in Arabic), 25 October 1949, Haganah Archives, 14/29. Another pamphlet reads: 'The Iraqi Jews are in a state of discomfiture and confusion, and they feel that the entire community has become a candidate for annihilation', Haganah Archives, 14/29.
32. Baghdad to FO, 27 October 1949, PRO, FO371/75183; 28 October 1949, PRO, FO371/75183 E13342.
33. Baghdad to FO, 27 October 1949, FO371/75183.
34. Berman to Mossad, 3 November 1949, Haganah Archives, 14/29. Al-Wadi replied that he 'is thinking of capturing the last ones who belong to the Zionist movement in Berman'.
35. Berman to Mossad, 21 November 1949, Haganah Archives, 14/30.
36. Berman to Mossad, 22 November 1949, Haganah Archives, 14/30.
37. Berman to Mossad, 27 November 1949, Haganah Archives, 14/30.
38. Mossad to Berman, 29 November 1949, Haganah Archives, 14/30.
39. See the letter from Hehalutz counsellors, 10 June 1950, Haganah Archives, 14/430.
40. 'The Situation of Iraqi Jewry', report by the Middle East Division, 28 September 1948, State Archives, 2387/4.
41. Minutes of a meeting between Yaacov Shimoni, acting director of the Middle East Division, and a delegation from the World Jewish Congress, 28 April 1949, State Archives, 2563/11.
42. See Yehoshua Freundlich (ed.), *Documents on the Foreign Policy of Israel*, vol. 1 (Jerusalem: Israel Archives, 1981), pp. 401, 413, 444, 509.
43. See detailed summary of political activity in Iran, October 1949, apparently written by the emissary Zion Cohen, Haganah Archives, 14/393.
44. 'Proposals for Action against the Persecution of the Jews in Iraq', 10 October 1949, Haganah Archives, 14/29c.
45. State Archives, 2563/8, n.d.
46. These memos are in the 1949 Iraq files in the Haganah Archives and the CZA. See, for example, a memo dated 17 October 1949, Haganah Archives, 14/29b.
47. Mossad to Berman [Iraq], 18 October 1949, Haganah Archives, 14/29c. According to a cable from Sir Alexander Knox Helm, the British minister in Israel, to the FO, 'The [Israeli] Foreign Minister…is afraid that, just as occurred with the Assyrians a few years ago, the matter will be kept secret until it is all over.' 18 October 1949, PRO, FO371/75182.
48. Statement by the government, State of Israel Information Services, 23 Ocober 1949, State Archives, 2387/4.
49. For details on his testimony, see Haganah Archives, 14/29. For example, the *New York Herald Tribune* wrote: 'The inquisition takes place daily. Paddywagons full of Jews pass through the Jewish quarter every day. Many Jews pursued them to find out where their relatives were being taken—but to no avail'
50. New York to FO, 1 November 1949, FO371/75183. See the denial by Iraqi Ambassador Abdullah Bakr in his letter to the *New York Times*, printed 31 October 1949.

51. *New York Times*, 2 November 1949. In addition, in an American document dated 29 October 1949, which reached Mossad personnel via Teheran, the US mission in Baghdad reported that, according to Iraqi government sources, there was evidence of a local Zionist organization with ties to Israel. 'The mission found no evidence to support the Jews' allegations of general persecution.' 'The Situation of the Jews and the Reply of the US Embassy in Baghdad', 29 October 1949, Haganah Archives, 14/41b. For the denial by the Iraqi government in the American press, see the letter by Ambassador Abdullah Bakr, note 50.
52. Investigation Division to Mossad, 8 November 1949, Haganah Archives, 14/29a.
53. Washington to FO, 2 November 1949, PRO, FO371/75183.
54. Washington to FO, 2 November 1949, PRO, FO371/75183.
55. Sir Henry Mack to Attlee, 12 December 1949, PRO, FO371/75183.
56. Washington to FO, 2 November 1949, PRO, FO371/75183.
57. Czerbinski [Carmil] to Aryeh Manor, 3 November 1949, Haganah Archives, 14/29a; Teddy Kollek to Ralph Goldman, 3 November 1949, Haganah Archives, 14/29a.
58. There is no hint of this in the British and American sources, although the Israelis thought the US might have had something to do with the enactment of the law. See remarks by Moshe Kol in the minutes of a Jewish Agency Executive meeting, 20 March 1950, p. 20: 'Those people in the State Department who influenced the decision of the Iraqi government…'
59. 'Our government responded affirmatively to the hint about a population exchange. But it is still far from being relevant' Mossad to Abraham Harman, 3 November 1949, Haganah Archives, 14/29b.

11
From Emigration to Expulsion: The Mass Immigration of Iraqi Jewry to Israel

FROM THE CRISIS TO THE DENATURALIZATION LAW

In late 1949, the Zionist underground began to play a major role in the Iraqi Jewish community, both among the Jews at large and among the community leadership. Through its connections with the leadership of the Jewish community, the underground even had some influence on the Iraqi government. The Zionist movement's main challenge was to rehabilitate Hehalutz, Hehalutz Hatza'ir, and the Haganah. A count of members found that there were about 700 left; another 250 had moved to Israel, 50 were in prison and 50 had quit. Of the 64 counsellors and other activists, only 14 remained, most of them young and inexperienced. Hehalutz and the Haganah opened new courses for counsellors and instructors and accepted new members.[1] Developments in the realm of aliyah were especially impressive. On 12 December, Nuri al-Said's government resigned; a few days later the emergency regime was lifted and civil law restored. From then on leaving the country illegally was merely a violation of the Passport Law, punishable by at most six months in jail and a fine of 100 dinars. Jews fled the country en masse via Iran. Between January and May 1950, about 4,000 arrived in Iran; in comparison, only 3,000 had arrived in Palestine in the eight years from 1941 to 1948 and 1,700 had arrived in Israel between December 1948 and December 1949. Most of the 4,000 emigrants crossed the border in the Basra area, although others travelled via Amara or Khanaqin. Most were young members of the Zionist movement or non-members who had some connection with the movement. Hundreds of other people—sometimes entire families—left Iraq with the help of private smugglers.

What motivated this mass exodus? In late 1949 there were thousands of Jews in Iraq who wanted to leave the country. Some were Zionists who wanted to move to Israel for ideological reasons; others had simply despaired of Jewish integration in Iraqi society on the basis of equal rights and obligations. The restoration of civil law in December 1949 was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for these people. After years of restrictions and prohibitions the border was open and there was no way of knowing when it would be closed again. Due to the uncertainty, thousands thronged the Iranian border, including unemployed young people and members of the lower classes who had been badly hurt by the economic crisis and discriminatory government policies. The departing Jews transferred large amounts of money out of the country, after the ban on the sale of real estate was rescinded along with the rest of the emergency laws. Impoverished Jews sold property in order to survive, and others, worried about their capital, started to smuggle money to Iran. The departure of the Jews with their money heightened the turmoil in Iraq, and the anti-Jewish atmosphere and government oppression intensified. The authorities tried to stop the Jews from leaving, but to no avail, since soldiers and police had received

large bribes to help the emigrants. Iran was no help to the Iraqi authorities either; it refused to surrender the refugees and thus encouraged further emigration and made border control impossible. Furthermore, Iraq did not dare toughen its policy vis-à-vis the fleeing Jews for fear of criticism from the West.

Thus, the outflow picked up speed, Iraq's control of its eastern border became dubious, and the economy continued to deteriorate. Soon the Jewish issue was put on the Iraqi government's agenda, this time as a matter requiring an alternative solution.

The solution was proposed in a bill introduced by the Iraqi government, now headed by a new prime minister, Tawfiq al-Suwaydi. It was passed by both houses of parliament and gazetted on 9 March 1950:

> The Council of Ministers is empowered to divest any Iraqi Jew who, of his own will and choice, desires to leave Iraq for good of his Iraqi nationality, after he has signed a special form in the presence of an official appointed by the Minister of Interior… This law will remain in force for a period of one year from the date of its coming into effect and may be cancelled at any time during that period by a royal Irada (decree) published in the official Gazette.[2]

What motivated the Iraqi government to enact this law? According to the government itself, as explained by Interior Minister Saleh Jabr when the bill was introduced to the legislature, the main factor was the mass exodus to Iran.

> It has been noted that some Iraqi Jews are attempting by every illegal means to leave Iraq for good… As the presence of subjects of this description forced to stay in the country and obliged to keep their Iraqi nationality would inevitably lead to results affecting public security and give rise to social and economic problems, it has been found advisable not to prevent those wishing to do so from leaving Iraq for good, forfeiting their Iraqi nationality…[3]

The Iraqi government wanted to get rid of the people whom it perceived as being responsible for the turmoil in the Jewish community by legitimizing what was happening anyway and formalizing the emigration to Iran. It was assumed that this would put an end to the illegal emigration; introduce some control over emigration and the export of capital; prevent foreign currency from being smuggled out of the country; get rid of agitators, who were particularly active in the Communist Party; and eliminate the underground Zionist organization. The result would be a better attitude among the Iraqi people toward those Jews who chose to remain in Iraq, market stabilization and economic recovery Thus Iraq's image in the West would be enhanced.

These expectations were based on two assumptions: that no more than a few thousand Jews—young people, the unemployed and the poor—would wish to leave, and that the emigrants would continue to travel via Iran. The law stipulated that those who chose to leave would renounce their Iraqi citizenship and their right to return to Iraq, would be issued a laissez-passer, and would leave Iraq within a period of time not exceeding 20 days. According to reports by the British ambassador, the Iraqi government expected no

more than 10,000 Jews to leave. The Israeli estimates were higher: 30,000–70,000 emigrants.[4] How did the Iraqi Jewish community view the idea of aliyah in March 1950?

THE EMIGRATION DILEMMA

When emigration from Iraq to Israel became legalized, it was the Iraqi Jews' first opportunity to extricate themselves from their tangled relationship with the Muslim majority and solve the Jewish problem in Iraq. But on the individual level, the question that each individual faced was one of profit and loss: was it worth trading a familiar present full of stresses and dilemmas with which they had generally managed to cope, for an unknown future that would undoubtedly involve difficulties that could not even be guessed at this point?

This dilemma is reflected in a report written by two Americans who were in Baghdad at the time (15–20 March 1950). Donald D.Stevenson and James E.Sutton, members of the American Friends Service Committee, had been sent to Baghdad to look into the situation of the Jews. Based on their conversations with US embassy personnel, Iraqi government officials, Christians and Jews, including some of the leaders of the Jewish community, the two men formed the impression that the Jews had many more opportunities in Iraq than they would have in Israel, and that the Jews themselves were aware of this. Their conversations with Jewish merchants led them to conclude that even those who wished to leave would not find Israel attractive and would prefer Europe or America, partly because of Israel's attitude toward religion. Stevenson and Sutton estimated that only 20,000 of the 100,000 Jews in Baghdad would choose to emigrate, 30,000 'might or might not go depending on developments, and the remaining 50,000 of the Baghdadi Jews would stay unless conditions became very much worse'. Who would leave? In their opinion, the emigrants would be mainly poor and unemployed people.[5]

This assessment was supported by a study conducted by US embassy personnel in Baghdad a year earlier, in March 1949. After investigating the Jewish community's attitude towards the idea of aliyah, the embassy concluded that the answer was built into the community's socioeconomic system. The embassy assumed that the religious leaders and their followers would be unwilling 'to give up their established positions here in exchange for an unpredictable fate in Palestine', and that the economic elite, comprising the leaders of the Jewish financial and business community, would split into two groups: a minority—those who identified with Israel—would want to go to Palestine, while the rest, apparently a majority of this class, would remain in Iraq. Unemployed clerks and functionaries, as well as young people who were not yet established, would no doubt wish to move to Israel, but the middle and lower classes—petty merchants, artisans, and so on—would have no interest in aliyah unless 'the religious and economic leaders (whose attitudes are estimated above) make active propaganda to persuade them'. Overall, according to Stevenson and Sutton, only a few thousand people would choose to move to Israel. They noted that this would hold true only if the Middle East was not destabilized by an aggressive Israeli policy. 'If Israel, however, pursues a policy of moderation and agrees to a peace settlement considered not too unreasonable by the Arabs, not more than a small proportion of Iraq's Jewish community would want to emigrate to Palestine.'[6]

The initial reactions in the Jewish street to the Denaturalization Law were consistent with the two Americans' expectations in terms of both the number of registrants for emigration and their socio-economic and ideological traits. Two groups of people signed up:

1. Members of the Zionist movement and their families, who had long hoped to move to Israel. Many of these people had relatives in Israel. At the time the Zionist movement and Haganah had close to 2,000 members in Iraq.
2. Thousands of poor people who had nothing to lose and hoped for a better life in Israel.

These people were the first to register for emigration. They were also the ones whom the sponsors of the law were trying to get rid of—the ideological and economic troublemakers. Many thousands more undoubtedly considered the possibility of aliyah, but at this stage did not decide to go through with it. But after a few weeks it became clear that the number of registrants had exceeded all expectations. In early May it was reported that approximately 47,000 people throughout Iraq had signed up.[7] By September the number was up to 70,000,[8] and eventually it reached 104,000. A few thousand others made their way to Israel secretly, for various reasons, via Iran. Altogether, the vast majority of the community left Iraq.

These figures indicate that within the first few weeks after enactment of the law—March-April 1950—developments were influenced by factors that had not been taken into account in the preliminary aliyah forecasts. What were these factors that tipped the balance from small-scale to large-scale emigration? When and why did registration for emigration stop being the result of a reasoned, logical decision and become an indiscriminate, all-encompassing current that swept up throngs of people who were motivated only partly, and not even primarily, by considerations of profit and loss? When and why did the irrational impulse overcome reasoned thinking?

To answer, we have to take a close look at the circumstances, events and developments in Iraq and in the Jewish community in those critical months in the spring of 1950: the Iraqi government policy and its economic repercussions; the reaction of Muslim society and its impact on events in the Jewish street; and finally, the responses of the traditional Jewish leadership and the young Zionist elite. Let us explore these factors one by one.

In this context, it is important to stress that we are considering *registration* for emigration and not the number of people who actually moved to Israel. The latter was totally irrelevant to the issue of the mass emigration of Iraqi Jewry for two reasons.

Firstly, the act of registration per se was an indicator of the Jews' attitudes toward aliyah, whereas the pace and timing of aliyah were determined by the organizers of the operation and by the governments of Israel and Iraq. This distinction is important, because the pace of aliyah lagged far behind registration. Only in mid-May did flights to Israel begin, and the disparity between the number of registrants and the number of emigrants increased considerably during 1950. By the end of the year about 80,000 people—more than 60 per cent of the community—had registered, but only about 19,000 of them had actually gone to Israel.

Secondly, registration made the decision to leave irrevocable. Even if some people changed their minds and regretted having signed up, they could do nothing about it. From the standpoint of the Iraqi authorities, registration was an expression of lack of

confidence in the Iraqi homeland. As soon as they signed up, the revocation of the Jews' citizenship was merely a procedural matter.

GOVERNMENT POLICY AND THE REACTION OF THE IRAQI PEOPLE

The actions of the Iraqi government in the months following enactment of the Denaturalization Law had a decisive impact on turning registration into a wholesale process. These actions ran distinctly counter to the intentions of the sponsors of the law; instead of generating security, stability and confidence, they reduced certainty and clarity and increased financial jitters. Problems cropped up from the very beginning, with the initial arrangements for emigration. The Iraqi government had assumed that the few thousand who would choose to emigrate would continue to travel via Iran, but they would do so legally and under the watchful eyes of the Iraqi authorities. To its surprise, although Iran had previously abetted the illegal departure of the Jews, it now acceded to an Israeli request for safer, more convenient, shorter and cheaper transit routes and refused to let them pass through legally This came as a total surprise to the Iraqi government.[9] The government has not come up with a departure plan', reported the emissaries in Baghdad. 'It is in trouble. It will resolve every issue when we confront it with a fact.'[10] Many weeks passed before the emigration route from Iraq was set up (the first plane took off on 19 May 1950), and in the meantime the Jewish community and the Iraqi state were beset by a great deal of confusion and uncertainty.

The unexpected results of the law were reported by the British ambassador in Baghdad two weeks after its enactment:

> Like many well intentioned Iraqi measures, its effects have been different from those intended. It has resulted in an increase in attacks by the Nationalist press on the Iraqi Jewish community as such. It has produced a still greater stagnation in the markets, while as far as I am aware…no Jew has yet come forward to take advantage of the possibility of legal emigration.[11]

According to British embassy reports, Jewish-owned commercial firms had closed or reduced their scope of activity More and more real estate was converted into liquid capital—as typically occurs in situations of uncertainty A drop in housing prices caused construction to stop. The sale of property lowered prices and suspended commercial activity, thereby severely harming local merchants who could not unload their inventory. Rumours that the government intended to freeze Jewish assets sowed panic. The situation was exacerbated by a law restricting the activities of banks and *sarafs* (money-changers, most of whom were Jews), which had gone into effect about two months earlier (12 January 1950). This law intensified the shortage of liquid money reduced credit and drove Jews in the financial world out of business.[12] The economic decline increased anti-Jewish agitation. According to the British ambassador, newspapers launched an anti-Jewish campaign, accusing the Jews of waging a cold war against the state in an attempt to paralyse commercial activity and of feigning inability to pay their debts in order to rob

the nation of its money. The press even accused the Jews of continuing to leave Iraq illegally in large numbers in order to smuggle out capital and valuables. In a meeting with the Finance Minister (16 March 1950), the managers of the large banks accused the Jews of sabotaging the country's economy.[13]

Cables to the Mossad confirm this state of affairs: Yesterday the Jews went to take their money out of the banks. A few large *sarafs* went out of business yesterday following a rumor that the government was about to block bank accounts. There are large sums in homes.'[14] Yerahmiel Asa of the Middle Eastern Jewry Department of the Jewish Agency, who was sent to Baghdad at that time (April-May 1950), described the grave economic situation, noting that this time the crisis had hit the well-off and even the rich and caused bankruptcies, the sale of property and a decline in market values: 'Jews are hardly buying anything. The lively, vibrant market life has turned quiet… The situation has, of course, also affected the economic situation of the non-Jewish local residents.'[15] In mid-April the banks were closed for a week. According to the Research Department of the Israeli Foreign Ministry

> The official reason given was the closure of accounts. But the real reason was the banks' fear that Jews who are about to leave Iraq would withdraw capital. In addition, they stopped conducting transactions in notes belonging to Jews.

This Research Department went on to say that the Jews were panicking and that several Jewish bankers and merchants had gone out of business.[16]

These developments made their mark in the Jewish community both economically and politically; 'as a result, the Jews have become more and more frightened and have dropped out of business more and more, and this has become a vicious cycle', the British ambassador wrote on 23 March 1950.[17] The commercial secretary at the embassy wrote of the impact on the Jewish business community—importers, exporters, commercial agents and retailers—and on their attitude toward Iraq and Israel:

> The majority of these belong to families which have lived in Iraq for many generations, and they consider themselves loyal Iraqi citizens and have no desire to leave their homes and businesses for the uncertainties of life in Israel: They realise that they are almost certainly better off in Iraq. However, recent events have been causing them to wonder whether life in Iraq will remain possible for them.[18]

The commercial secretary's remarks refer to the comfortable middle class, the heart of the Jewish community The doubts that seeped into these people about their future in Iraq are a key point for understanding the process that led to mass emigration: as tension, fear and uncertainty mounted, more and more people grew worried about their fate in Iraq.

In addition to the socio-economic turmoil, there were attacks on Jews by the general public. From the very beginning, sales of Jews' household belongings were a focal point of tension. On 9 March, members of Istiqlal attacked the locations where belongings were being sold;[19] British ambassador Sir Henry Mack termed the incident: 'a small demonstration by young nationalists where the auction was taking place'. The police

temporarily banned the sales, but they were resumed later on a larger scale. Shi'ite clerics called for a boycott of the goods. 'It seems that there is some danger that Muslim fanaticism will be aroused,' Mack concluded.[20]

People were also attacked. On 8 April 1950, a bomb was thrown into a Jewish café. According to the Mossad emissaries, 'Four Jews were wounded, one of them critically. In various parts of the city there were provocations and stones were thrown at Jews.'[21] Another bomb exploded two months later near a café in Batawin, a neighbourhood of private homes where many Jews lived. The next day the emissaries reported that three Jews had been wounded and six people, some of them Jews, had been detained for questioning.[22] For some reason, this bomb left no impression in the memories of the Iraqi Jews and was not even mentioned in the trials held in Iraq a year later; this may be an indication of how marginal the incident was.[23]

Another problem that came up around this time was that of the Jews in the peripheral towns of northern Iraq. Soon after the enactment of the Denaturalization Law, the rural Jews in Kurdistan found their security deteriorating, and their economic situation, which was already poor, became much worse. Apparently, the law undermined the status of the Jews, depicting them as unprotected aliens, and gave free rein to violent elements that sought to take over Jewish-owned property with the help of the local authorities. In early June 1950, Mordechai Ben-Porat reported: 'I met with the head of the community [Heskel Shemtob]; he is shocked at the situation in the north. Thousands of families have no bread.'[24] That same day, the emissaries reported on the villagers of Sandor, the only village in Iraq whose population was made up entirely of Jewish farmers: 'The neighbors of the village are threatening to murder them unless they leave the village.'[25] The Kurdish neighbours pressured the rural Jews to leave their homes and go to Baghdad; these Jews joined the first wave of registrants for emigration.[26]

THE ZIONIST MOVEMENT AS THE LEADERSHIP OF THE COMMUNITY

At this fateful point in the history of Iraqi Jewry, the traditional leadership displayed total helplessness. The leaders had a definite political interest in encouraging the emigration of the 'malcontents' who were agitating and undermining domestic tranquillity in the Jewish community. But they had just as much of an interest in Jewish continuity in Iraq because of their genuine identification with the Iraqi state, their desire to retain their leadership status and their desire to keep their extensive property. These people had the most to lose from the emigration of the Jewish community: they owned land and other real estate, banks and money-changing firms, big businesses and various commercial enterprises. Their deep involvement in society and the economy and their awareness that they would not be able to sell their property and take the proceeds out of Iraq made them oppose emigration. They intended to stay in Iraq. But they did not try to allay the community's fears and did nothing to calm the people down. Rabbi Kadoorie had been forced out of his position as community president in December 1949 and lost whatever influence he had; his replacement, Shemtob, had been in office for less than three months when the Denaturalization Law took effect. Shemtob cooperated with the Zionists and, surprisingly did nothing publicly to influence the people, allay their fears and guide them. The other

Jewish dignitaries—those wealthy, influential men who effectively led the community—were gripped with paralysis. None of them tried to dissuade the community at large from registering or at least to warn them and inform them in greater detail of the difficulties that they could expect in Israel. They took no action against registration for emigration even when they realized that more and more people were registering and the number of Jews remaining was dwindling. It is hard to explain their silence; but this was nothing new. Throughout the 1940s, although the community leaders knew of the existence of a Zionist underground, they did nothing much to try to stop it and did not even warn the people against it. They left it an open door.

And the Zionist movement burst through that open door. It proposed clear, decisive stances and a solution—the State of Israel. It bore a national-messianic halo and in the autumn of 1949 even managed to turn its most trying hour into leverage to achieve hegemony over the Jewish community. Now it filled a vacuum and became an alternative leadership, circumventing Heskel Shemtob. Certainly the chronological proximity between the persecution of the movement and the Denaturalization Law—only about three months—facilitated the process. In any event, when the Zionist movement became the leader and guide of the Jewish community, it was only natural that many more people would register to leave the country.

For the first few weeks after the enactment of the law, the Zionist activists forbade registration; they were waiting for a clarification of the aliyah routes and a decision by the Israeli government as to its willingness to take in the Jews of Iraq. This ban heightened the tension in the Jewish community. On 8 April 1950, the Zionist leadership (that is, the leaders of Hehalutz and the Haganah, along with the emissaries) convened and discussed the registration issue in view of the pressure from huge numbers of people who wanted to sign up. At the end of the meeting the leadership decided to instruct the people to register and not to wait for instructions from Tel Aviv. A bomb had blown up that day in a Jewish café, wounding four people, and the two events were presumably related. The meeting may have been scheduled following the bomb, but the decision to call on the Jews to register could not have had anything to do with the bomb because there were already thousands of people pressing for permission to register and threatening to do so even without permission from the Israeli government and the emissaries.[27] Nevertheless, the decision was a bold step because Israel's position was not clear; Israelis were debating whether the new state was capable of taking in the Iraqi Jews immediately Moreover, it meant taking heavy responsibility for the fate of those who would obey the movement's instructions. The activists' faith in the Zionist ideal and their zeal to implement it, combined with their confidence that Israel would not ignore the aliyah needs of Iraqi Jewry, paved the way to this decision.

To inform the Jews of the decision, the leadership issued a proclamation:

> O sons of Zion dwelling in Babylonia, flee.
>
> Today we face a new opportunity and a great turning point in the history of this Diaspora community The hour is already nigh when all Jews should rush to register, as this corresponds to the most important stage in our program. Today we are deciding to get out of this Diaspora hell. We should all rush into the practical stage and go to register. The movement calls on all the Jews in all classes to take advantage of this

> decisive opportunity. Comrade! Be aware that you are now the vanguard and you must instruct and urge the Jews to move to Israel wherever you happen to be. Jews! Israel is calling out to you: 'Leave Babylonia'.[28]

This call was read out to worshippers in synagogues throughout Iraq on the night after Passover. Copies of the proclamation, along with practical instructions, were distributed to Hehalutz branches countrywide.[29] The next day, thousands of Jews thronged the registration stations. The proclamation is important not because it called on the Jews to leave for Israel but because it came at a time when Iraqi Jewry was seriously pondering its future, due to the deteriorating economic and security situation. The fact that the proclamation was written in the name of the State of Israel lent it added force and gave the Jews the impression that the State of Israel and the Israeli government were calling on them to leave Iraq and move to Israel. Furthermore, because the law was to be in effect for just one year, the Jews were afraid of missing a one-time opportunity to leave Iraq.

Registration was not limited to Baghdad. Many Jews in the provinces signed up, including almost all those in small towns. Despite the distance, these communities had close ties with Baghdad Jewry, especially because the Iraqi Zionist movement had branches around the country while its political, organizational and ideological leadership was based in Baghdad. The call to leave Iraq reached even the smallest Jewish communities.[30] Some of the provincial communities were already emotionally prepared to emigrate; Jews fleeing to Iran had passed through many of these places—Basra, Amara, Mosul, Kirkuk and Khanaqin[31]—thus exposing the local Jews who had helped them to the idea of leaving the country and often motivating them to follow their example. Moreover, there was a lot of sympathy for the Zionist movement in the conservative, traditional communities, especially those in the Kurdish north. In these towns and villages, entire families and even entire communities registered for emigration, motivated in part by the economic crisis and deterioration of the security situation.[32]

Thus, in the summer of 1950, registration for emigration proceeded at a dizzying pace. The economic slump and the decline in the Jews' sense of security in March and April boosted the numbers thronging the registration stations to unexpected heights. As registration swelled, the economy and sense of security deteriorated even more, prompting more people to register to leave. From then on, the process simply snowballed.

FROM EMIGRATION TO EXPULSION: THE TRAGIC END

By the summer of 1950 it was clear that registration was encompassing growing segments of Iraqi Jewish society. The aliyah stage began in May 1950 and was supposed to end in March 1951, a year after passage of the Denaturalization Law. In fact, the massive evacuation operation lasted until August 1951, but several developments in the autumn of 1950 radically transformed the aliyah from Iraq and exacerbated the prospective emigrants' status and conditions. Ultimately, what had begun as voluntary emigration turned into an expulsion, and the emigrants became persecuted, destitute refugees.

The change began as a result of the immigration policy of the Israeli government: the pace of aliyah lagged far behind registration and revocation of the registrants' citizenship.

By September 1950, only 10,000 Jews had left; 60,000 of the 70,000 registrants were still in Iraq. The problem grew worse. By mid-November only 18,000 of 83,000 registrants had left.[33] Matters had not improved by early January 1951: the number of registrants was up to 86,000, only about 23,000 of whom had left. More than 60,000 Jews were still waiting to leave! According to the law, Jews who had lost their citizenship had to leave Iraq within 15 days. Although in theory, only 12,000 Jews still in Iraq had completed the registration process and had their citizenship revoked, the position of the others was not very different: the Iraqi government was in no hurry to revoke their citizenship only because the rate of departure was already lagging behind the revocation of citizenship, and it did not want to exacerbate the problem.[34]

Meanwhile, thousands of Jews had been fired from their jobs, had sold their property, and were waiting for Israeli aircraft, using up their meagre funds in the meantime. The thousands of poor Jews who had left or been expelled from the peripheral cities, and who had gone to Baghdad to wait for their opportunity to emigrate, were in an especially bad state. They were housed in public buildings and were being supported by the Jewish community The situation was intolerable.

Reports from the Mossad emissaries depicted the severe hardship: 'New persecutions have begun in the north; the Jews are being forced to hand over their property and are being threatened with murder. The inhabitants of the small villages have to be taken in.'[35] In August it was reported that the police had moved Jews from the peripheral cities to Baghdad: They are being ordered to leave and forced to do so with a police escort. These people are being forced into the big synagogues and other concentration points.'[36] Another report said:

> There are already seven centers for emigrants. Conditions in them are horrendous. Two infants died in one center alone… Most of the children and adults are suffering from fever, and I'm afraid there will be an epidemic. The sewage has broken down in many of the centers, and the smells and contamination are making many people sick.

About one hundred prospective emigrants forced their way into the registration centre after breaking down the doors to the building. The police were summoned to disperse them and an iron gate was subsequently installed in the entrance.[37]

On 15 September, a desperate letter was sent from Baghdad:

> We are now facing a very stupid situation vis-à-vis the Jews and the community [leadership]. Everything that we built has been destroyed; we are regarded as frauds. We know you are the only source we can turn to with just demands. We didn't believe that this source would give us the runaround. That [runaround] has caused the Jews here to believe with perfect faith that Israel doesn't want them… One can't be fed Zionism instead of bread. Soon they will eat our people here alive… We consider ourselves duty bound to close up shop and return home. Why should we sit here and watch the death, before our very eyes, of chained Jews whom we chained with our own hands.[38]

As stated above, this situation was a consequence of the Israeli immigration and absorption policy. Throughout this period, Israel refused to instruct its emissaries in Baghdad to limit registration for emigration and instead expressed willingness to take in all Iraqi Jews who wished to leave. But immigrants were also flooding into Israel at the time from Poland and especially from Romania, where the exit gates had unexpectedly been re-opened, and Israel was unwilling to limit aliyah from there either. Israel could not afford the initial absorption of such large numbers of immigrants and therefore set quotas based on priorities. And Poland and Romania were given priority over Iraq. Between May and December 1950, approximately 20,000 emigrants came from Poland, more than 40,000 from Romania and about 23,000 from Iraq. The average quota for aliyah from Iraq was about 3,000 per month, including those travelling via Teheran.[39]

The reason given for according priority to immigration from eastern Europe was concern that the communist regimes there would close their gates and put an end to the exodus. The likelihood of a halt to emigration from Romania was perceived as a bigger threat than the deteriorating economic and security conditions of the masses of stateless Jews in Iraq. It was chiefly Ben-Gurion's decision. Ben-Gurion maintained that the Iraqi leaders were determined to get rid of the Jews who had signed up to emigrate and assumed that delaying their departure would not put an end to the process. In contrast, he was afraid that aliyah from Romania would be terminated suddenly by an order from high up,[40] and aliyah from Poland was expected to stop at the beginning of 1951. Thus, in late 1950 the Israeli government needed a few months' respite, after which it intended to speed up aliyah from Iraq.

But soon the delay in evacuating the Jews became the problem of the Iraqi state and not just that of the would-be emigrants and the emissaries. The condition of the Jews had ramifications for the overall political situation, domestic security and the Iraqi economy The Iraqi government found that the problems of instability and turmoil not only remained unsolved but had become worse. Particularly infuriating was the awareness that the source of the problem was the Israeli government, which held the key to the volume and rate of departure of Iraqi Jewry

These developments changed Iraq's attitude towards the Jews. From now on Iraq sought to get rid of everyone who had registered immediately and at almost any price. This policy was exacerbated when, in mid-September 1950, Nuri al-Said replaced Tawfiq al-Suwaydi, who had initiated the Denaturalization Law, as prime minister.[41] Nuri was determined to drive the Jews out of his country as quickly as possible, and when he discovered that Israel was unwilling to increase immigration quotas[42] he suggested various ideas for expelling the Jews. The British ambassador reported:

> The Prime Minister is determined to bring about an accelerated departure, and he told me that he is thinking of moving the Jews to Beirut or Mafraq by air and trucking them from there to the Israeli border, on the assumption that given their immigration policy the Israelis would not dare turn them away.[43]

Nuri voiced these threats to the Americans, too, and demanded that the great powers intervene to accelerate the aliyah.[44]

But King Abdullah of Jordan refused to help Iraq, and although the British and Americans pressured Israel, they were aware of its objective difficulties in taking in the immigrants. Ultimately it was Israel that determined the rate of emigration of Iraqi Jewry The Iraqi government found itself in a bind. In January 1951 it was forced to agree to direct flights between Baghdad and Lod instead of the indirect route used until then—flights to Nicosia and from there to Lod—provided that the evacuation of the Jews picked up speed.[45]

Although Nuri's threats had no impact on the fate of the Jews on the political level, they were prominently publicized in the media, both in Iraq and in Israel. These threats filled the final pre-aliyah stage with fears and worries and encouraged Iraqi officials to abuse the departing Jews before they boarded the planes and to destroy their baggage.[46]

The next stage in the deterioration of the situation of Iraqi Jewry began on 14 January 1951, when a grenade was thrown near the emigration registration centre in the Mas'uda Shemtov synagogue; three people were killed and about twenty wounded. Around the same time, Iraq imposed a strict deadline for the departure of the Jews, threatening not to let them out after 31 May. These developments, combined with British and American pressure, the end of aliyah from Poland, and a drop in aliyah from Romania, prompted Israel to launch an emergency rescue operation for Iraqi Jewry. More than 70,000 Jews left Iraq for Israel in 1951, the vast majority in the four months from March to June.[47] They included 19,000 people who had registered after the grenade incident, not long before the registration deadline. These were middle- and upper-class Jews who had been very hesitant before finally deciding to leave with the vast majority of the Jewish community.

THE PROBLEM OF JEWISH PROPERTY IN IRAQ

The cruelest blow fell on Iraqi Jewry at the end of the emigration period. On 10 March 1951, precisely one year after the Denaturalization Law had come into effect, when 64,000 people were still waiting to emigrate, the Iraqi legislature enacted a law blocking the assets of Jews who had given up their citizenship. Shop doors were sealed, bank accounts were blocked and the community became destitute overnight. Previously one of the wealthiest Jewish communities in the Middle East, Iraqi Jewry was now dirt poor. Iraqi assessments at the time put the value of the blocked assets at 12 to 14 million dinars.[48] The law came as a complete surprise. Because the Denaturalization Law had not mentioned property at all, and because the first emigrants had been permitted to take their belongings, including valuables, the Jews assumed that they would be able to sell their property gradually, continue smuggling their capital to Iran and then transfer it to Israel or elsewhere, as some of those who had already reached Israel had done. Many of the emigrants had entrusted their assets to relatives and acquaintances who intended to stay in Iraq and could take care of selling them off gradually Now they were left destitute. The blow was particularly painful because the middle and upper classes were the hardest hit, since they had registered last and had not yet managed to sell their property. These Jews arrived in Israel impoverished and bruised, without the funds that they had thought would help them get started there.

Newcomers to Israel reported a worsening of the way they were treated on their way out of Iraq: 'At the airport the customs police plunder the immigrants' few belongings, and fortunate is he who has only 50 per cent of his belongings stolen, who has not suffered beatings, curses, spittle, and kicks.'[49] A few days later two immigrants reported:

> The height of brutality came today when the police started to strike the immigrants with whips. The moans of whipped adults mingled with the screams and wails of infants crying from hunger and thirst. They aren't allowed to bring any money with them at all, and there's no point in even talking about the plunder of the immigrants' belongings.[50]

Even the limit of 50 dinars per person that could be taken out of the country was now lowered to five dinars.[51] Throughout the period of aliyah from Iraq, the Israeli government showed an interest in transferring the emigrants' capital to Israel. Inquiries into the possibility of an orderly, overt, legal transfer of funds through the import of goods or capital to Israel, under the auspices of an international company, were rejected because there was no realistic way of accomplishing it.[52] A suggestion that the property of Iraqi Jews be exchanged for the property of Israeli Arabs, thereby encouraging the latter to leave Israel, was dropped in the very first stages of consideration,[53] but even if it had been implemented it would have been only a partial, very limited solution to the problem of Jewish assets.

Meanwhile, the Jews used the services of professional smugglers and money-changers in Iran and Beirut and the Israeli emissaries in Iraq and Teheran to smuggle money out of Iraq. Even in these cases, the owners lost much of the money transferred, and sometimes the entire sum. According to Mossad records, the Mossad acted as the intermediary for transferring more than 430,000 dinars between November 1949 and January 1951.[54]

On 15 March 1951, just a few days after the enactment of the law blocking Jewish-owned assets, the Israeli government discussed the matter. On 19 March, Foreign Minister Moshe Sharett made a statement in the Knesset denouncing the Iraqi action against the country's Jews. He then proclaimed:

> By blocking the assets of tens of thousands of Jews who are immigrating to Israel…the Iraqi government opened an account with the State of Israel. We have an account with the Arab world; it is the account of compensation owed to the Arabs who left the territory of the State of Israel and abandoned their property in it as a result of the Arab world's war of aggression against our country. The action now carried out by the Iraqi government regarding the property of the Jews, who did not break its laws and did nothing to undermine its status and its security, has forced us to link the two accounts. Therefore, the government has decided to inform the relevant UN institutions—and I hereby declare this publicly—that the value of the blocked Jewish assets in Iraq will be taken by us into account when figuring the compensation that we have undertaken to pay the Arabs who have abandoned property in Israel.[55]

The equation that set the Palestinian Arabs against the Iraqi Jews was now expanded by the Israeli government to include the blocked assets of the two population groups. Furthermore, Sharett's statement implies that the Israeli government had appropriated the handling of the issue of Jewish property and that the Iraqi Jews were no longer a party to any potential discussion of their own property. The Israeli government wanted to deduct the value of the Iraqi Jews' property from the total that it was supposed to pay someday to the Palestinian Arabs. The Iraqi Jews would not receive any compensation for their property

THE BOMBS

As the aliyah operation—officially named Operation Ezra and Nehemiah—drew to a close, several Hehalutz and Haganah activists, Israeli emissaries and Muslim Iraqis were put on trial in Iraq. The affair began in mid-May 1951, when the Iraqis managed to capture two Israeli emissaries—the aliyah emissary Mordechai Ben-Porat and the intelligence emissary Yehuda Tajer. Soon afterwards, dozens of Hehalutz and Haganah members and intelligence personnel were arrested. In a series of trials held in late 1951, two of the detainees, Yosef Basri, an attorney who headed an Israeli intelligence network in Iraq, and Saleh Shalom, who had been in charge of an arms cache for the Haganah, were charged with throwing the grenade at the Mas'uda Shemtov synagogue in January 1951 and several subsequent bombs at Jewish and other centres in order to sow panic and spur Jews to move to Israel. Basri and Shalom were executed in January 1952, Tajer was sentenced to life imprisonment, others were sentenced to various jail terms, but Ben-Porat managed to escape from jail. The charges were groundless for several reasons.

Firstly, by 13 January 1951, close to 86,000 Jews had registered, and about 23,000 of them had left for Israel. Hence, neither the synagogue incident in January 1951 nor the other bombs in the course of 1951 were what hastened the Jews' departure. The acts of terrorism that were likely to influence large numbers of Jews to emigrate were those in April and June 1950. Throughout this period the British painstakingly monitored events in the Jewish street and reported on moods, but they did not mention the two bombs of April and June 1950 at all. It is hard to believe that the British would have neglected to mention these incidents if such a major impact on registration to leave Iraq had been ascribed to them.

Also, the two bombs in April and June were not mentioned in the trials conducted by the Iraqi government either. The charges focused on the incident in the Mas'uda Shemtov synagogue. A report sent by the British embassy to the Foreign Office suggested another explanation linking the bombs with Israeli immigration policy:

> One theory which is more plausible than most is that certain Jews have endeavoured, by throwing bombs at certain buildings, to focus the attention of the Israeli Government on the plight of the Jews in Iraq so that they would keep the airlift moving quickly, and, possibly as a second object, to induce those well-to-do Jews who had decided to remain in Iraq to change their mind and emigrate to Israel.[56]

Nevertheless, henceforth the emigration of Iraqi Jewry was linked to the bombs. The claim that there would not have been any substantial emigration had Israel, through its emissaries (including Mordechai Ben-Porat), not sown terror in the Jewish street was voiced not only by the Iraqi authorities but also by Palestinian Arab spokesmen and by many Iraqi Jews in Israel.[57] This affair was also intertwined with the issue of the blocked Jewish assets in Iraq versus the blocked Arab assets in Israel, and these subjects were supposed to be discussed in future peace talks between Israel and the Arab states. Presumably by linking the bombs with aliyah, the Iraqi government was trying to shake off denunciations of Iraq in the Arab world for helping Israel by letting the Jews leave. The Palestinian Arabs[58] adopted the allegation of Israeli terrorism in order to counter Israeli claims that Jewish survival in Islamic countries was no longer possible due to antisemitism, discrimination, persecution, and even expulsion. Many Iraqi Jews, bitterly disappointed with the conditions that awaited them in Israel, found in the affair of the bombs an explanation for their aliyah and placed the responsibility, and perhaps even the blame, on the Israeli government and the Zionist activists.

CONCLUSION

Between early 1950 and late 1951, from the start of the registration process under the Denaturalization Law until their aliyah, the status and situation of the Iraqi Jews changed drastically. The process began with immigrants motivated by Zionist ideology and others who regarded Israel as a place where they could improve their civil and economic status. But soon, due to worsening economic conditions, a declining sense of security and fear of missing a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to leave Iraq, aliyah became a wholesale process that pulled in the middle class and eventually some of the upper class. This wholesale process that led to mass emigration was not self-evident at first. Only the unforeseen reactions by Iraqi society to the Denaturalization Law and the resultant changes in economic, social and security conditions convinced the Iraqi Jews that they had no chance of security and stability in Iraq and prompted the masses to register. Most people registered voluntarily, on the assumption that their future in Israel, despite all the difficulties, would be better than the future that awaited them in Iraq. But due to the circumstances described above, they arrived in Israel as persecuted, destitute deportees. The tragedy is that the situation in which the Iraqi Jews found themselves was not the motivation for aliyah but the result of it. Iraqi Jewry was the only community that paid such a high financial price for moving to Israel.

NOTES

1. Berman [Iraq] to Mossad, Yerah [Asa], 27 January 1950, Haganah Archives, 14/427.
2. Abbas Shiblak, *The Lure of Zion: the Case of the Iraqi Jews* (London: Al Saqi Books, 1986), p. 131.
3. Ibid., p. 133.
4. On the Iraqi government's estimate, see 7 March 1950, PRO, FO371/82478 EQ1571/8. On the British estimate, see Baghdad to FO, 1 April 1950, PRO, FO371/82479 EQ1571/16. On the Israeli estimate, see minutes of a Jewish Agency Executive meeting, 20 March 1940, CZA. It should be noted that Hillel's prediction of 70,000 emigrants was based on his feeling

that the process would take on a life of its own. Even this estimate was lower than the actual number of emigrants.

5. See 'Report to the American Friends Service Committee', 30 March 1950, State Archives, 2463/8.
6. Baghdad to Secretary of State, Washington, 8 March 1949, copy, PRO, FO371/75182 E-3971.
7. On 7 May 1950, the pilot Ronald Barnett and Mordechai Ben-Porat reported that approximately 47,000 Jews had registered for aliyah (Doron and Dror to Mossad, 7 May 1950, Haganah Archives, 14/429b).
8. Moshe Gat, *The Jewish Exodus from Iraq, 1948–1951* (London: Frank Cass 1997), p. 183.
9. On the pressure exerted on the Iranian government and the reasons for it, see *Gat, Jewish Exodus*, pp. 82–5.
10. Berman [Iraq] to Mossad, Da'at, 11 March 1950, Haganah Archives, 14/427a.
11. Mack to Bevin, 21 March 1950, PRO, FO371/82478, 1571/10.
12. Mack to FO, 23 March 1950, PRO, FO371/82422.
13. Ibid.
14. Berman [Iraq] to Mossad, 17 March 1950, Haganah Archives, 14/428. See also another telegram containing the names of those who went out of business. Berman to Mossad, 20 March 1950, Haganah Archives, 14/428.
15. Yerahmiel Asa, 'Bi-shelihut' [On a mission], *Mi-bifnim* 15 (January 1952), p. 542. A report sent from Teheran to the Mossad on 20 March 1950, mentions riots by people from Istiqlal where sales were taking place. Haganah Archives, 14/428.
16. Research Department to Mossad, personal and confidential, 26 April 1950, Haganah Archives, 14/428.
17. Baghdad to FO, 23 March 1950, PRO, FO371/82422.
18. Commercial secretary, 21 March 1950, PRO, FO371/82422 EQ 1103/2.
19. Berman to Mossad, Da'at, 11 March 1950, Haganah Archives, 14/427.
20. Mack to Bevin, 21 March 1950, PRO, FO371/82478, 1571/10. Baghdadis were called upon to boycott the sales in the following words: 'What you pay for rags they will return to you in lead in the hearts of your sons and brothers. Furthermore, when you buy from the Jews you are ruining the markets and undermining the economy' See Shlomo Hillel, *Ruah qadim* [East wind] (Jerusalem: Edanim, 1985), p. 274.
21. 'From the Emissaries in Iraq to the Mossad in Israel', 9 April 1950, Haganah Archives, 14/348. Later in the report, the emissaries express their opinion that squads should be trained in hand-to-hand combat so that they can respond to such attacks without using weapons: 'This will enhance the Jews' reputation among the Arabs, strengthen internal morale, and perhaps stop the violence and force the government to intervene on our behalf.'
22. Dror [Ben-Porat], Berman [Iraq] to Mossad, 3 June 1950, Haganah Archives, 14/429.
23. Moshe Gat does not discuss this particular bomb in his chapter on the bombs and their connection to aliyah. Neither does Hillel, although he devotes an entire chapter to the bombs. Nor was the bomb mentioned in the trial conducted by the Iraqi authorities in late 1951.
24. Dror to Mossad, 3 June 1950, Haganah Archives, 14/429.
25. 'From the Emissaries in Iraq to the Mossad for Aliyah', 3 June 1950, Haganah Archives, 14/429.
26. For a discussion of this subject, see Esther Meir, *Ha-tenu'a ha-tzionit ve-yehudei Iraq, 1941–1950* [Zionism and the Jews in Iraq, 1941–1950] (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1993), pp. 238–9.
27. Ibid., pp. 237–8.
28. Yosef Meir, *Me-ever la-midbar: Ha-mahteret ha-halutzit be-Iraq* [Beyond the Desert: The Pioneering Underground in Iraq] (Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defense, 1973), p. 240.
29. Ya'acov Azar, 'Ha-hakhra'a al aliyat yehudei Iraq' [The decision regarding the aliyah of Iraqi Jewry], *Niv Ha-mo'adon* 10–11 (July-August 1960), p. 15.

30. Ezra Laniado, *Yehudei Mosul* [The Jews of Mosul] (Tirat Hakarmel: Research Institute of Mosul Jewry, 1981), p. 377.
31. On clandestine aliyah in 1949–50, see E. Meir, *Ha-tenu'a,* pp. 224–5.
32. On the Jews of Kurdistan and their attitude toward aliyah, see Laniado, *Yehudei Mosul,* p. 377.
33. Gat, *Jewish Exodus,* pp. 183–4.
34. Ibid., p. 131. Iraq proved its ability to revoke the citizenship of thousands of Jews instantly on 8 March 1951, when the Denaturalization Law expired.
35. Berman [Iraq] to Mossad, attention Atzmoni [Gur], 18 June 1950, Haganah Archives, 14/430.
36. Excerpts from notices and letters by Mossad emissaries in Iraq, 10–23 August 1950, Jewish Agency Immigration Department, file 512, Jewish Agency Archives, Zerifin.
37. Ibid.
38. Berman [Iraq] to Mossad, 15 September 1950, urgent, Haganah Archives, 14/432. Another letter, dated 29 October 1950 (Haganah Archives, 14/433), describes the Jewish community's financial plight and its inability to continue supporting the poor prospective emigrants: 'We couldn't get a cent because they really have no source of funding… The community is in bad shape. The merchants stopped working…after the issuance of import licenses to Jews was prohibited. Eighty percent of the clerks and officials have lost their jobs.' Ronald Barnett, a pilot for Near East, an El Al subsidiary that flew the immigrants to Israel, also reported on the terrible conditions: 'More than sixty thousand (I repeat, sixty thousand) Jews have renounced their citizenship; have sold their homes; have lost their jobs, are idle, waiting…waiting…waiting… A few thousand have come (or more correctly, have been expelled) from the provincial towns, penniless and destitute. They are roaming all around in terrible condition… First they eat up the money that they somehow obtained to pay for the flight for themselves and their families; then they become a burden on the community I assume it is known that about 50 infants have died.' Barnett to Mills, 22 September 1950, Haganah Archives, 14/432.
39. See the table of aliyah statistics in Gat, *Jewish Exodus,* pp. 118–33.
40. Ibid., p. 131.
41. On the differences between the two men's personalities and the effects this had on the treatment of the Jews, see ibid., p. 118.
42. Mack, Baghdad to FO, 3 October 1950, PRO, FO371/82483 EQ1571/39.
43. Ibid.
44. On Nuri's threats, efforts, and failure, see Gat, *Jewish Exodus,* pp. 118–133.
45. Ibid., pp. 140–1.
46. Itamar Levin, *Sheqi'a ba-mizrah: Hisul ha-qehilot ha-yehudiyot bi-medinot arav ve-shod rekhushan* [Sunset in the East: the Liquidation of the Jewish Communities in Arab Countries and the Plunder of their Property] (Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defense, 2001).
47. See the table of aliyah statistics in Gat, *Jewish Exodus,* p. 158.
48. Levin, *Sheqi'a ba-mizrah,* pp. 80–1.
49. 20 March 1951, Haganah Archives, 14/389; Levin, *Sheqi'a ba-mizrah,* p. 84.
50. Levin, *Sheqi'a ba-mizrah,* pp. 84–5.
51. Kahane Report, 15 March 1951; Levin, *Sheqi'a ba-mizrah,* p. 80.
52. Levin, *Sheqi'a ba-mizrah,* pp. 57–8.
53. Ibid., pp. 59–61.
54. 'Transfers from Iraq from November 1949 to January 1951', Haganah Archives, 14/435c.
55. Divrei ha-Knesset, 19 March 1951.
56. Baghdad to FO, 27 January 1951, FO371, EQ1571/91. For a detailed discussion, see Gat, *Jewish Exodus,* pp. 175–91.
57. Yehuda Shenhav, 'Yehudei Iraq ve-ha-heshbon ha-leumi' [(Iraqi Jewry and the national account], in *Hamishim le-arba'im u-shemoneh* [The fiftieth anniversary of 48] (Tel Aviv:

1999). Unfortunately, Shenhav does not identify the people who expressed these allegations to him. Shenhav also cites another allegation: 'The Israeli government 'naturalized' Iraqi Jewry as a collective. Based on this naturalization, the government "nationalized" the property of all the Iraqi Jews in order to use it—rhetorically, symbolically, and legally—as full-fledged state property' (p. 75). Indeed, the Israeli government took advantage of the blocking of Jewish assets in Iraq to avoid paying compensation to the Palestinian Arabs, but it never promised compensation to the Iraqi Jews and never took responsibility for the price that the Jews paid on the way to 'Zionist *hagshamah*'. It should be borne in mind, however, that the immigrants who paid the highest price for their aliyah were the Yemenite Jews, hundreds of whom lost their lives.

58. For example, the Palestinian Arab historian Abbas Shiblak notes five bombing incidents: a Jewish café on 8 April 1950; the Mas'uda Shemtov synagogue on 14 January 1951; the American Cultural Center on 14 March 1951; the Lawee car dealership on 10 May 1951; and the Stanley Sha'ashu'a dealership (an importer of American cars) on 5 June 1951. Apparently, Shiblak was not aware of the bomb thrown in early June 1950. See Shiblak, *The Lure of Zion*, pp. 119–20.

Conclusion

From a Zionist perspective, the arrival of Iraqi Jewry in Israel closed a circle that had been started in 1942 with the posting of the first Zionist emissaries to Iraq. The circle had been sustained by the ideology of Herzlian Zionism. This aliyah was perceived as eternal proof of the victory and correctness of the Zionist path. But from a historical perspective, in light of the relations between the Zionist movement and the Iraqi Jewish community before 1942, the encounter and collaboration between the two were just one option, not necessarily the only or self-evident one.

What were the points of contact between the Zionist movement and Iraqi Jewry? Although its roots were in the Arab-Muslim world with its culture, and its long history, Iraqi Jewry was facing west. Its sights were set on modernity and western education, everything that was perceived as 'European progress'. The Jewish community had been westernized, emancipated, and rapidly integrated in modern Iraqi society and culture. A reversal of these processes began in the 1930s, culminating in the Farhud of June 1941. The Farhud revealed the dark, menacing side of the Iraqi national movement, with its fascist and antisemitic tendencies. The Iraqi nationalists considered the Jews an ethnic and national minority, identified them with British colonialism and Zionism, and therefore regarded them as treasonous aliens who did not belong in Iraq.

The Farhud changed the dynamics of Iraqi Jewish history. It undermined the ideological and social foundations of the integration trend that typified the upper class, the educated people, and the community officials, while also triggering an awakening in the Jewish community and an active search for ways of changing the situation, whether through emigration or through revolutionary movements. These dynamics were seen mainly among the young, who had been raised on the principles of equality and Iraqi nationalism and were therefore hit hardest by the crisis. They were also the most severely affected by the economic and social discrimination and the restrictions on higher education. Among these young people was a core group of modern leaders who had emerged from the middle class rather than the ruling class of the Jewish community. This group sought a revolutionary solution to the Jewish problem in Iraq, whether the communist solution or the Zionist solution.

On the other side was the Yishuv in Palestine, for which aliyah was an existential need. When the Jews in Palestine perceived the magnitude of the annihilation of European Jewry and realized that by the end of the war there might be no Jews left in Europe, they sought an alternative pool of immigrants to ensure the survival of the Yishuv. The Jews of Islamic countries and the surviving European Jews were identified to be that pool. This is where the young Iraqi Jews and the Zionist movement crossed paths. Together they sought to conquer the Jewish street, to Zionize it and to motivate the Iraqi Jews to move to Israel en masse. The deterioration of prospects for a Jewish future in Iraq and the annihilation of European Jewry paved the way for the ties that developed in the early 1940s between Iraqi Jewry and Zionism.

In order to achieve the Zionist objectives, there had to be a group of local activists—loyal, reliable socialist Zionists—willing to fight for their views. This cadre of activists had to be created through education—by imparting a European education, fostering independent thinking (provided that it was compatible with the basic principles of socialist Zionism) and political and social awareness, and providing personal experience by offering the opportunity to hold various positions in the movement's institutions. Eventually, these activists were supposed to fight for control of the Jewish community offering an alternative to the traditional leadership, while remaining a loyal extension of the political leadership of the Yishuv. Like other European movements, Zionism sought to implant in the east an organizational structure with European values and methods, in the hope that it would produce the same results as in Europe.

Hundreds of Jewish youngsters were drawn to the movement and to its national banner. Zionism gave them an ideological goal, a sense of belonging and national pride. It promised them a homeland to replace the Iraqi homeland that had let them down. It offered revolutionary fervour, activism and vibrant social activity for boys and girls together. Aliyah was perceived as an alternative to integration in Iraqi society and the Iraqi economy, which was no longer an option. For those who did not want to move to Palestine, the Zionist movement offered security, pride and paramilitary skills through the Haganah.

But alongside its overt political functions, the Zionist movement also had hidden social and cultural functions. It offered an alternative to the educated young people from the lower middle class who had no oppor-tunity for social and political expression in the community establishment. Their aspirations for power and influence were legitimized by this avant-garde movement, which was itself challenging the community leadership. The movement also had cultural significance: it offered Jewish youngsters admission into what was perceived as western culture.

Hence the encounter between Palestine and Iraqi Jewry was based, on the one hand, on the search for a pool of human resources and, on the other hand, on a quest for an ideal, a national framework and a destination for emigration. Their common interest overcame (though did not eliminate) the reservations and rejection that characterized the relationship between the New Yishuv and the Jews of Islamic countries. The collaboration was primarily instrumental, whereas the reservations were ideological and cultural. Due to this dialectic, the attractive and repellent forces coexisted and continued to exert an influence in the 1940s.

On the ideological level it was not a meeting of equals. It was a face-off between the Land of Israel and the Exile, and both the Palestinian Jews and the members of the Iraqi Zionist movement—and to a certain extent all of Iraqi Jewry—agreed on what these two concepts meant from a traditional-religious perspective and from an ideological socialist-Zionist perspective. The Land of Israel was the sacred, exalted, creative, constructive side; the Exile was pure negativity and was supposed to be abolished, whether by earthly or messianic means. In the meantime, the Zionists regarded the Diaspora as a source of human and economic resources for building up Palestine. The encounter also had cultural significance in the context of European colonialism and its values. It was an encounter between two different cultures at different stages of modernization: one was 'western' and therefore perceived as more highly evolved and superior; the other was 'eastern' or 'Levantine' and therefore perceived as inferior. To the Palestinian Jews, the ideological

and moral superiority of their national, socialist and cultural values was self-evident. The members of the Iraqi Zionist movement identified strongly with the national and socialist values and internalized them despite the difficulty in fulfilling them in practice. However, they were ambivalent about the imported cultural values, and although they appreciated and admired European culture, they were also loyal to their own cultural values: their way of life, their customs, the Arabic language, their music and poetry, their cuisine and their social value system.

Two main trends characterized the evolution of the Zionist movement in Iraq in the 1940s. The first was the development of a cadre of dedicated, reliable local activists who had assimilated the ideological, educational and cultural principles of Zionism. They headed the Hehalutz committees, founded a youth movement and proved their ability to organize aliyah. Some of them even began to do the job of aliyah emissaries, at first de facto and later officially. The Haganah, too, began showing independence: members were placed in command of streets and entire sections of the city, and towards the end of the period even the Haganah emissary himself was a man who had started in its ranks. In the Iraqi Zionist movement's final year of activity, while the mass aliyah was taking place, the emissaries to the movement were also alumni of the local Hehalutz organization.

The second trend had to do with the Zionist achievements on the geographical and social levels. The movement set up branches throughout Iraq, from Kurdistan to Basra. It was active primarily among the lower middle-class, but it also reached lower-class youngsters through its youth movement and attracted a small number of young people from the upper middle-class. Some of the new members, especially the wealthier ones, were not Zionists but Jewish nationalists who joined the Haganah only In retrospect, they were one of the Zionist movement's main sources of power. These two trends are what gave the Iraqi Zionist movement its stability and its influence. Yet we should remember that the movement was small, was active chiefly in a marginal, uninfluential social class and, even at its peak in early 1948, had no more than 2,000 members.

The movement was the diametrical opposite of the local leadership. The latter was in the midst of a crisis and, whether voluntarily or for lack of a choice, shut its eyes to the impending political and social changes. These leaders regarded Zionism as the lesser of two evils compared with communism (which had a lot of support in the Jewish street) and took no action against it in its ten years of existence. Perhaps, as the product of a traditional society with conservative political and social views, the community leadership simply lacked the tools to contend with a modern political movement based on an ideology and a modern structure. But more than anything else, it failed to realize that social forces that had developed in the community in the wake of emancipation, modern education and the rise in the standard of living, had turned into an opposition that found its place in the Zionist movement. The leaders of the community did not understand that this opposition had acquired political and social awareness, adopted democratic and egalitarian values and learned to function in public settings. If they had given the socioeconomic class that was attracted to Zionism a place in the community institutions and shared the day-to-day responsibilities with them, they might have dulled the opposition fervour and the radicalism of their demands.

It took several years for the Iraqi Zionist movement to turn its activists into a local leadership. The process picked up steam in the late 1940s, when a halt to aliyah provided an opportunity to forge a large group of activists, including experienced counsellors and

newcomers. The lack of a Hehalutz emissary for two years (from the summer of 1948 until the summer of 1950) also helped the movement to consolidate its independence. Israeli independence launched a new era in relations between Israel and the Iraqi Jewish community. Zionist influence in the Jewish street increased as a result of the enthusiasm and pride that accompanied the establishment of the State of Israel and its victories on the battlefield. The Zionist movement was perceived as representing Israel. But the turning point came in late 1949, during the crisis, when the activists proved themselves to be an authentic, proactive and even aggressive local leadership capable of influencing the masses and having a rare gift for spotting the weaknesses of their political rivals. They even rebelled against the authority of the Zionist hierarchy (the emissaries and the Mossad) and shortly thereafter took responsibility for setting in motion the mass registration for emigration. The crisis was a turning point, as the Zionist activists managed to use their most difficult hour as leverage in its political and social struggle for influence in the community The chronological proximity between the Denaturalization Law and the crisis turned the group that headed the Jewish rebellion against the traditional leadership into a leading force in the Jewish street. Reports that large-scale aliyah could be expected from Iraq found the Israeli government and the Jewish Agency Executive embroiled in a debate over restrictions on mass immigration. From the government's perspective, it was not a good time for tens of thousands of Iraqi immigrants to arrive. Weeks of debates and disputes failed to produce an agreement between the government and the Jewish Agency, and therefore they could not send clear instructions to the emissaries in Iraq. The resultant vacuum did not last for long. It was filled by the Zionist activists, who had perfect faith in Zionism and aliyah and did not hesitate to call on the Jews, in the name of the State of Israel, to renounce their Iraqi citizenship and move to Israel. When registration began, they took this job upon themselves and ensured Zionist control of Operation Ezra and Nehemiah. In the end, the inept policy of the Iraqi government vis-à-vis the emigration of the Jews, the worsening economic crisis and the growing sense of insecurity, combined with the unambiguous stance of Zionism, prompted many Jews to leave. Within a few months, more than half of the community had registered. Others signed up in early 1951, a few thousand left via Teheran, and the rest—fewer than 10,000—remained in Iraq.

Although these were the circumstances that brought Iraqi Jewry to Israel in 1950–1951, aliyah from Iraq probably would have been inevitable anyway. The rise of the anti-colonialist, anti-Zionist, anti-semitic, right-wing Iraqi nationalist movement would not have allowed the Jews to live as equals in Iraq. Another factor was the Zionist-Arab conflict in Palestine, with no peace visible on the horizon. It was clear to everyone involved—British, Iraqis and Jews—that any tension in the Middle East would impinge directly on the situation of the Jews. Their chances of having stability and equality in Iraq appeared slim, and therefore it is understandable that many members of the community, especially the young people, wished to leave Iraq. But this does not explain the number of emigrants, and especially the number who moved to Israel. That can be explained only by the events in Iraq and within the Jewish community in the months preceding and immediately following the enactment of the Denaturalization Law. These incidents were responsible for the timing, destination and magnitude of the emigration. The timing was determined by the Iraqi government, Israel was the only available option, and the magnitude of emigration was due to the growing insecurity of the Jewish community in

1950. The Iraqi Zionist movement undoubtedly had some influence on steering the historical developments in the Zionist direction. In a different, non-catastrophic context, as occurred in other Muslim countries such as Iran and Egypt, one might have expected a much slower, drawn-out exodus and a range of destinations, with Israel being only one of them—not necessarily the main one and certainly not the most attractive. Under different circumstances the Jews could have prepared differently for emigration and taken more property out. Mass aliyah was just one of many possibilities.

Furthermore, from a broad historical perspective, the aliyah of Iraqi Jewry can perhaps be seen as part of a global process that the Jewish people underwent in modern times: the migration of substantial portions of the Jewish communities in the less industrialized, less advanced dictatorships in eastern Europe and the Middle East to democratic, industrialized and advanced western countries that offered the Jews options that they had not had in their countries of origin. The Iraqi Jews' expectations of an improvement in their legal status and their social and economic position in Israel indicate that aliyah was viewed according to the same criteria that guided the extensive Jewish migrations during the previous two centuries.

The circumstances and timing of the aliyah of Iraqi Jewry had a critical impact on the encounter with Israel and on the immigrants' initial absorption. More than 120,000 Iraqi Jews arrived in Israel in a very short period of time—approximately 14 months—at the end of a wave of immigration that doubled the Israeli population and during one of the most difficult times in the history of immigrant absorption in Israel. After just a few hours in the air, they became a mass of individuals, bereft of any social and economic status, who did not speak Hebrew or the European languages spoken by the Israeli establishment. With this as their starting point, they had to struggle to make a living and contend with social difficulties and cultural problems. Moreover, the Israelis perceived their immigration as 'rescue aliyah', that is, immigration by a persecuted Jewish community that had cried out and been answered, helped and saved by Israel. The Iraqi Jews perceived the events completely differently: as they saw it, they had responded to Israel's call to come to Israel, and they had paid a high financial and social price for doing so. They had given up their social and economic positions and had lost their property. Although it was indeed a case of 'rescue aliyah', they had not needed to be rescued until they had registered to leave Iraq. Whereas Israel expected them to be grateful, the Iraqi Jews expected Israeli society to recognize and appreciate the sacrifice that they had made. The gap between the opposing viewpoints made the Iraqi Jews feel cheated and led to a buildup of suppressed rage against the Israeli establishment, and especially against those perceived as having been directly responsible for their aliyah: the members of the Zionist movement.

The Zionist activists from Hehalutz and the Haganah, whether they had moved to Israel illegally in the 1940s or arrived in the mass aliyah, were supposed to play an important part in integrating the Iraqi Jews in Israel. But this leadership, which had proven its amazing vitality in Iraq, lost its power and influence upon arrival in Israel. The Iraqi Hehalutz movement broke up and each member went his or her own way, each to their own family. Those who had been *supported* by their families in Iraq now had to *support* their families. They had to deal with housing and employment problems, and they were forced to give up their dream of fulfilling the pioneering goals that they had been taught in Hehalutz. The few who remained on kibbutzim affiliated with Hakibbutz

Hameuhad found themselves marginalized in the great enterprise of the early 1950s, because few Iraqi Jews joined kibbutzim and because the kibbutz movement's ideological insularity and its location in the opposition kept them far from their target population in the transit camps. Those who moved to the cities—and they were the majority—did not become involved in Israeli politics. The Iraqi Zionist movement was identified with Hakibbutz Hameuhad, and the members had only weak, foggy concepts of other political parties and trends. When they arrived in Israel they were surprised to discover that Hakibbutz Hameuhad, as part of Mapam, belonged to a narrow sector of Israeli society that held opposition views and was embroiled in a bitter confrontation with the majority party, Mapai. They themselves were identified with Mapam. They quickly discovered that the immigrant-absorption system, like everything in public life, was dominated by the ruling party and that in order to become part of the establishment they would have to join that party For many of them, it was psychologically and ideologically difficult to adapt to the Israeli political system. The Israeli establishment probably did not do enough to involve them in immigrant absorption either, whether because the system was already staffed or because it was easier to work without authentic representatives of the newcomers. In any event, the internal struggles between political parties in Israel discomfited and put off the former activists. Many chose to concentrate on their own personal integration problems. Some of those who had been prominent in clandestine aliyah or the Haganah in Iraq joined the Israeli security services, and the secrecy of their work prevented them from engaging in public activity.

The Iraqi Zionists lost all their status, not only vis-à-vis the Israeli establishment but also among their own community Because the establishment did not recognize them as leaders, did not welcome them into its midst and gave them no authority for helping to integrate their fellow community members, they lost their influence and leadership ability But they were blamed for the absorption problems of the Iraqi Jews anyway The fact that they themselves integrated better and more quickly—whether because they spoke Hebrew or because they received priority in obtaining housing and employment—gave rise to grievances. Although the Israeli establishment gave them preference in getting settled themselves, it did not give them the opportunity to organize and represent the Iraqi Jews in Israel and thus to improve their integration in Israel.

This post-aliyah decline of the leadership that had blossomed in the Diaspora was nothing new. It characterized all waves of aliyah since the 1920s. What is interesting about this decline is its connection with developments in Israeli society in the early years of the state. The Iraqi Zionist activists were leaders with a socialist-Zionist orientation who sought to integrate their fellow Iraqi immigrants in the model society being built in Israel. But by the 1950s there was no longer any place for the voluntary avant-garde path of the Iraqi Hehalutz movement. Israeli society was now based on a petite bourgeoisie to whom socialist values were foreign, and the Israeli economy had become capitalist. The values of the pioneering activists, the pioneering ethos and collectivist values were no longer central to Israeli society and to the Israeli experience, and they soon became objects of nostalgia.

The irony of the story is that it was the impressive success of the Iraqi Zionist activists in taking over the community leadership and heading the aliyah operation that caused their downfall. This end may have been built into their success.

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