

BAGHDAD

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BAGHDAD

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PRESIDENT BAKR'S REPLY TO NIXON'S MESSAGE



The document we are now releasing for our readers is old indeed, as it dates back to the 23rd of January 1974. Yet, it still has its actual value. President Bakr, as may be seen, does not express the specific reaction of a small country, but he speaks on behalf of all countries of the Third World whom international capitalism consider just as simple suppliers of raw materials at a low cost.

Excellency,

I am in receipt of your letter in which you propose the convocation of a meeting between the major energy consuming States and the producing countries in order to regulate the matters pertaining to energy importation and prices. While fully appreciating the paramount importance of this question I should like to put forward the viewpoint of the Iraqi government through making the following points:

1—We have come to the realization that there is a trend towards limiting the participation of the energy consuming States to a specific number of large and developed industrial States, whereas in point of fact all the countries of the world consume energy to some extent or another. If the question of energy gains prominence as a dramatic one in a number of major industrial States in view of the gigantic industrial and military machine possessed by those States and the high standards of living they enjoy and considering

also the extensive mass media and political means at their disposal, the other energy consuming States, particularly the poor ones, suffer a great deal from this question and to an extent affecting gravely the minimum of their livelihood and their urgent need for development. . . . and they can at the same time hardly find any compensation for the scarcity of energy and for the high prices as is the case with the developed industrial States which resort for this and other reasons unrelated to energy to raising the prices of the goods exported by them to very high levels. Hence it is our opinion that the entire family of nations should participate in any regulation of the question of the importation of energy and its prices in the interest of the welfare and happiness of all.

2—Petroleum is not the only commodity affecting the prosperity and stability of the world. The atom, iron, copper, wheat and vital industrial products,



are by way of example, important to human life. Their availability in such quantities, on such terms and at such prices as are suitable for those needing them is a matter of exceeding importance to human life. It is our belief that any regulation of the matters pertaining to any one of those commodities cannot be stable and fair unless it encompasses all of them. The world is in great need for the regulation of the use of the atom for peaceful purposes in order that such use may not be the sole monopoly of the developed States. It is also in great need for the regulation of the importation and pricing of iron, wheat, copper and vital industrial commodities.

3—With regard to the prices of oil, our government has a clear and specific viewpoint which we have already declared on more than one occasion. We criticized the pattern in which the rise in oil prices was made and the short period within which this was effected. Because we believe that there are certain quarters which want to exploit this question in a manner which is inconsistent, in the end, with the interests of producing countries and is detrimental to their relations with the consumer States. This will benefit, in the end, the monopolist States and quarters which are more able to manipulate arbitrarily the economic affairs of the world through the gigantic possibilities they possess. These are States and quarters having well known special political objectives. We think that the real value of oil—a commodity which is on its way to exhaustion—

is much more than its current prices. This becomes apparent first through a comparison between oil prices and the costs of other energy alternatives used for the same purposes. Secondly, these prices should be assessed in terms of the great importance of this commodity in the future, considering the fact that oil is not so much an ordinary fuel for industry as it is a raw material for the production of chemicals and petrochemicals—commodities whose importance to the world economy will double amidst their increasing paucity.

It should be mentioned here that the current levels of oil prices cannot be considered too high when compared with the continual increases in the prices of industrialized materials and the commodities basic to the life and progress of the peoples.

You will no doubt realize, Mr. President, considering the fact that your country is in the forefront of oil-producing countries and owns the biggest companies operating outside your country and in our very region, that oil was one day a commodity with an unspecified price. Due to the absolute control of the monopolies over this commodity starting from its place underground up to the filling stations it was those monopolies which decided the prices in accordance with their own assessments and interests and in complete disregard of the interests of the family of nations and the producing countries. However, after that full or partial nationalization had been carried out and quantities of free oil had been placed on the world market the real need for oil become apparent

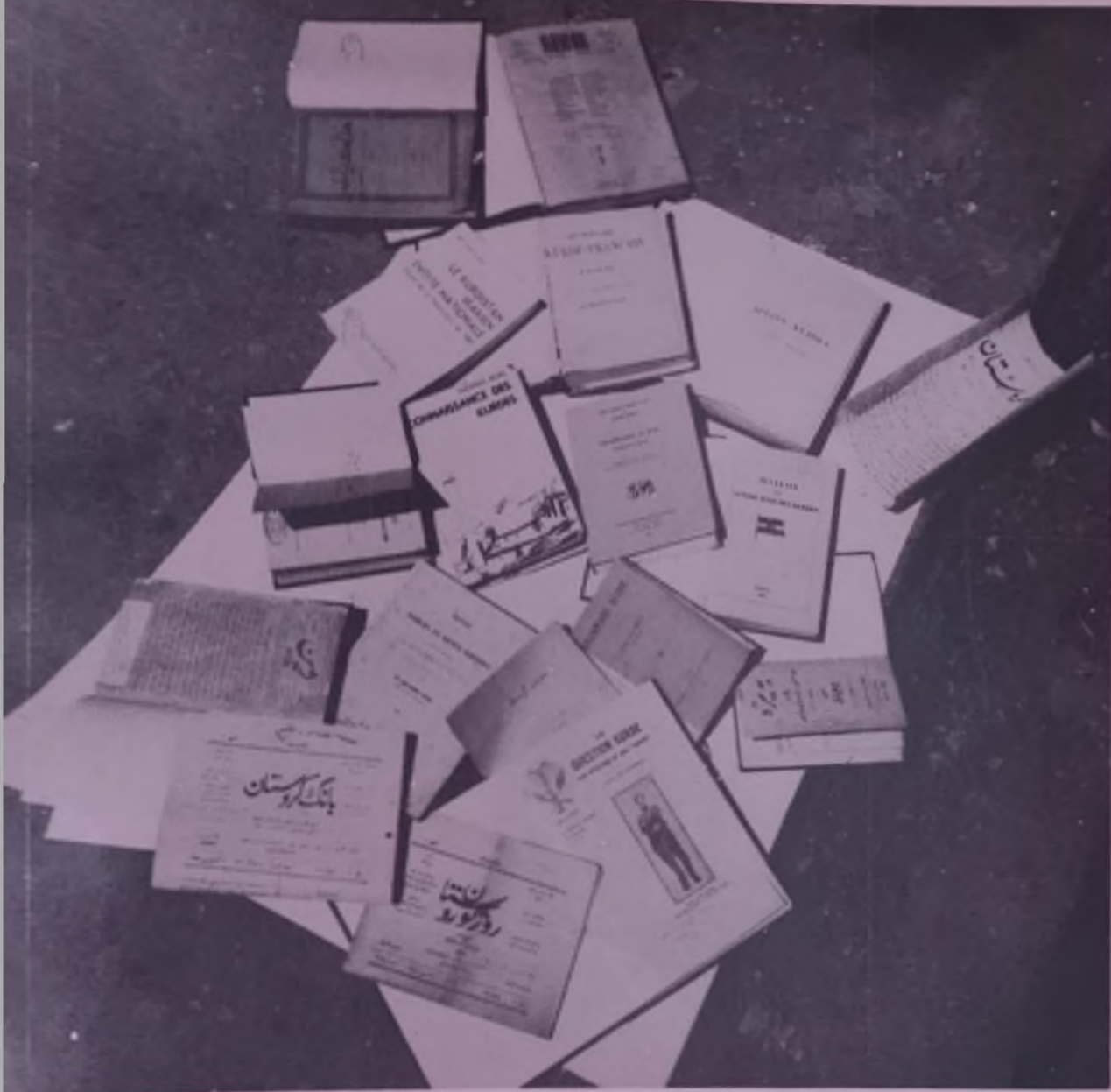
and the fixing of prices for it in proportion to its importance became possible. At the same time, however, when we compare the rise in oil prices in recent years with the rise in the prices of raw materials and industrialized materials in the major industrial countries, in the forefront of which is your country, we will find that the rise in oil prices, despite our reservations which we have already mentioned, is merely for the sake of preserving the purchasing power of the income of the oil-producing peoples. This purchasing power suffered in the past from a continual deterioration as well as heavy losses for the producing countries when the prices of oil were continually deteriorating at a time when other commodities registered stupendous rises. By way of example the rises in prices since 1958 up till now are 370% for gold, 350% for foodstuffs and 300% for constructional materials and iron. At the same time the prices of most industrial products rose in percentages similar to the ones referred to above. This will probably give you a clear picture the extent of the suffering by the entire world as a result of the rise in prices and their instability insofar as vital commodities and materials are concerned.

Our country is among those countries which have suffered from the bitterness of imperialist dominance and from the blackmailing of the monopolies. This brought untold harm to it. Hence it is only natural that we genuinely feel the necessity of the prevalence of a world system based on mutual and benefit and ensures prosperity and peace for humanity at large. It is only natural that we should

enthusiastically take the initiative in any sincere work which is apt to achieve this purpose. However we cannot under any circumstances, and we believe many States and peoples subscribe to our conviction, agree to formulas leading to placing the control of work economic affairs in the hands of certain States and the focussing of attention on one issue and thereby leaving other vital issues unresolved. This, in our estimation, will lead to the imposition of some kind of guardianship or monopoly by a number of States over the entire world community. This the world community resolutely rejects after it has struggled with courage and honour on a firm basis of justice to deliver itself from imperialism in all its forms and to build its new life based on freedom and equal cooperation among all peoples.

In conclusion I think that the best framework for discussing this question and other vital questions touched on by me in this message is the United Nations Organization and its competent organs. The United Nations is the only legitimate body in the world on which devolves the responsibility for regulating international life in its fields.

Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr,
President of the Republic of Iraq.



As long ago as the early forties, Kurdish circles requested that the Government of Baghdad should give due regard to the cultural problems of the Kurdish people of Iraq: in particular, the creation of a Kurdish Academy. This resulted in the Declaration of 11th March 1970 and on August 19th of the same year, the Revolutionary Command Council issued a decree for the establishment of the Kurdish Academy, and took responsibility for its management. A year and a half later, the same Council published a decree introducing certain modifications which had been found necessary for the efficient functioning of the new institution.

The Academy's headquarters were established in Baghdad, in the same premises as the Iraqi Academy of Sciences, a natural place, for according to the Law the Kurdish Academy is a branch of the Academy of Sciences, while still enjoying autonomy. The Kurdish Academy will soon move to more comfortable accommodation in the new buildings especially built to provide them with more space, in contrast to the cramped rooms at present occupied. Though its headquarters are in Baghdad, the Academy may also hold its meetings in other part of Iraq, if this decision

THE KURDISH ACADEMY

is made by a two-thirds majority of its members.

Composition of the Academy

The members of the Academy may be classified into four categories: first of all, active members of Iraqi nationality, who should not exceed 15 in number. They constitute the Assembly of the Academy, and have the right to decide on its activities and administration. Only five of them can be employed full-time by the Academy.

Secondly, the Assembly has the power to elect ten more active members from among non-Iraqi Kurds. They have the right of full participation in the Academy's scientific activities.

The third category consists of associated members. These are elected because of their special knowledge of the Kurdish language in one or the other of its dialects, or because they have particular competence in a scientific line. The Academy also has honorary members.

The administration is in the hands of a committee of five members selected from the active Iraqi members: these are elected by the General Assembly of both Academies. The chairman of the administration has two vice-chairmen and two members to assist him. Here, we would mention that we were welcomed and shown around by professor Kamal Mazhar, secretary, on our visit to the Academy.

Activities of the Academy

The academy's prime concern are the problems connected with the Kurdish language. As the 11th March 1970 Declaration had introduced teaching in Kurdish in Kurdistan, all books required for the various subjects had to be supplied urgently. Linguistically, this entailed very hard work, particularly where standardisation of language in the scientific and technical fields was concerned. One of the Academy's main tasks is to ensure the effective control of this work. To achieve this, the Academy has started the compilation of a general dictionary containing all the dialects, and also other special dictiona-

ries dealing with various scientific subjects.

The same is true in spelling, for although the Arabic alphabet is the one used in Iraq, spelling is far from being standardised.

There is also great scope for the Academy to record and publish works of the Kurdish cultural heritage both in the arts and literature either oral or previously published.

An impressive task has already been accomplished in one particular sphere: the library. The Kurdish Academy's library is the most complete one specialising in books written in Kurdish and about the Kurds in the East as well as in the West. Many generous contributions by Iraqi or foreign organisations helped in collecting over ten thousand volumes in a year and a half, among which are many rare books and periodicals.

Methods Used

Nine commissions have been established by the Institutional Decree to ensure the Academy's success and if necessary, these may set up temporary sub-commissions, such as that responsible for the registration of folklore documents.

At present the Academy has its own printing press; this facilitates publication of works of research, translations, or other works requiring reprinting. The first issue of the Academy's magazine has already come from the press. This 1973 issue has 800 pages and is divided into two sections, Kurdish

and Arabic. Each article in Kurdish is followed by a summary in Arabic and vice versa; an index in English is also attached. For this issue, let us mention the English translation of the 19th August 1970 decree establishing the creation of the Academy. It should be noted that the main modifications made by the decree of 4th April 1972 have not been included. So, the reader should refer to the Arabic text.

In order to accomplish its task, the Academy is particularly concerned in exchanges with corresponding institutes abroad. Contact set up by statute have already been made either through non-Iraqi active members, or through associated members, but direct contacts have also been established in Arab and foreign countries; in Europe and in USSR, where five scholarships have been offered to students by the Academy of Sciences. Moreover, two Iraqi members were invited to participate in the Orientalists' Congress held in Paris in July, 1973.

After three years of hard effort, it can truly be said that the achievement of the Academy has been immense. Scientists like Livon Manassarian of Soviet Armenia, Miss Joyce Blau of France and others have already visited the Academy's library of which it can be very proud. Once the Academy has moved into its new premises, it will then be able to provide for research workers whatever they should expect from such an institution.

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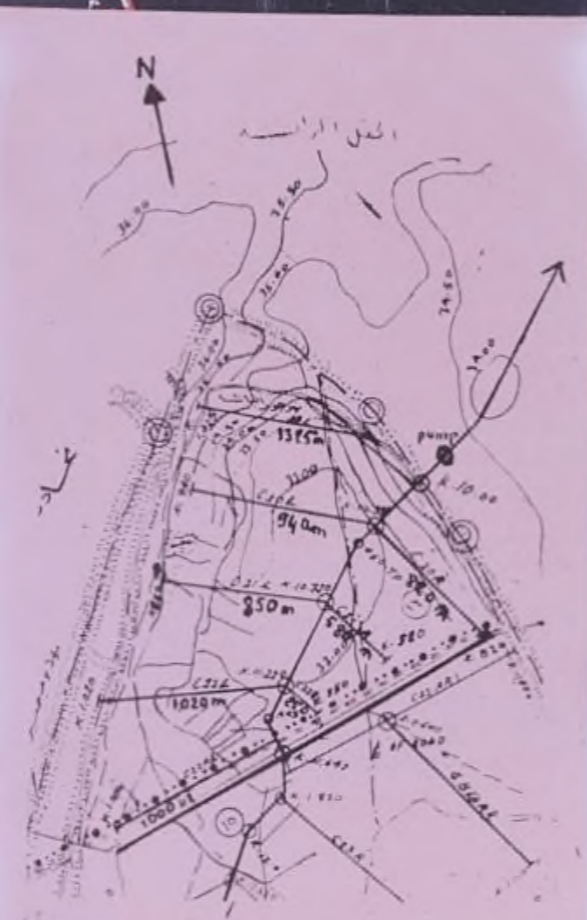


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العلمي الكردي

المجلد الاول
العدد الاول
١٩٧٣

ABU MNAYCIR



President Bakr and Vice-President Saddam Hussein on a visit to Abu Mnaycir:

The traveller who came to Baghdad along the road from Ramadi last Summer, found, some 30 kilometres from the city, a collection of tents which, pitched in a square, had all the appearance of a military camp. What might perhaps have surprised him was the absence of all offensive or defensive equipment particular to an army. At certain hours, he might notice that digging large, wide ditches appeared to be the only activity of these soldiers. At a closer look he would be surprised to see that some of the teams were composed only of young ladies, sometimes even school-girls. This unusual camp was military in appearance only. The teams of young men in khaki were not soldiers but students of different Faculties of the University and secondary schools of Baghdad, who willingly devoted one week of their vacation for the improvement of a part of their country's land.

The Abu Mnaycir Camp where young men came one after the other to work throughout the harsh summer of Iraq, has now become a symbol. In the provinces, this example was the starting point of many similar projects where young city students, far away from their earlier origin, could, by their effective participation in an activity of public interest, experience at least for a few days the hard labour of those who constitute the basic foundation of the country, the workmen and peasants of Iraq.

A National Duty

First of all, let us demonstrate where the public interest in such a project actually lies. Passing by car through the alluvial plains of Iraq, the traveller has been impressed by the vast areas covered, according to the season, by pools of stagnant water or by large white or brown spots disfiguring the landscape like leprosy and revealing the presence of salt. All these extensive areas which in the past were producing abundant cereal-crops now give only a rough and thorny weed.

It is necessary for the future prosperity of the country to recover these lands by drainage, especially as they are known for their remarkable fertility.

Because of this, ambitious projects were conceived with the object of making vast areas of barren land under cultivation again. One of these projects covers an area of approximately 300,000 hectares of land situated to the west of Baghdad. This project is known by the name of Saqlawiya, from an old, now dried up, canal which was formerly used for the irrigation of this area. The main canals for carrying away the water were already prepared, but circumstances had prevented the continuation of work. The project was now ready for a new experiment of voluntary collective work and the Directorate-General of Irrigation agreed to allocate a small part of this vast area for the experiment.

What makes a land saline ?

The average western reader is no doubt unaware of the elements involved in the recovery and improvement of saline lands. These few lines might at least answer this question without undue technicality.

There is no need to know the reason for the salt in the soil and in fact, all lands contain some of it. Yet it so happens that salt deposits are found in thick layers below certain soil structures as a result of the receding sea or enormous stretches of saline water gradually drying. During the course of ages, these layers were then covered by various other layers of soil.

Let us now imagine a depression in the ground causing a fold containing salt-beds of average depth. Rainfall penetrates the soil and reaches this layer thus becoming impregnated with salt. The water accumulating in the fold is therefore brackish. In hot weather, this water comes up to the surface by capillary action and evaporates, leaving the salt behind to appear on the surface in the

shape of white or brown areas staining the soil just like petroleum. The salt-impregnated land then becomes unfit for cultivation.

Moreover, this phenomenon is also the result of irrigation. Part of the irrigation water is used by the growing crops, part is evaporated by the sun, but some penetrates the soil and rejoins the under-ground water, thus raising its level. But when this level gets near the surface of the soil, the salination then appears. Unfortunately, this happens with most of the lands of the Iraqi plain under cultivation. In this way the country loses approximately 125,000 hectares of arable land every year as a result of the soils gradually becoming saline.

Recovering and improving the soil

It is obviously impossible to remove the salt-layers from the depth of the soil. The presence of salt at a depth of 3 or 4 metres or more is of no importance to vegetation; it will not prevent cultivation, provided the soil is of good quality on the surface. Let us recall that salination of the



surface-soil is not directly connected with the presence of the salt but rather with the rise of a brackish water-layer from the subsoil. The problem therefore consists in getting rid of this water and in lowering the level of the water-table to a depth where it can no longer be harmful to vegetation. This operation is carried out by drainage. The same principle is applied in drying a swamp.

Drainage-ditches should be dug to a suitable depth; the water lying on the soil runs into them, and with it the dissolved salt. These canals then empty into drains where the water is pumped along, if necessary, so that it may be discharged into streams and completely diluted.

The problem of salt on the surface may possibly occur to you but this, in fact, is no longer important. Rainfall and irrigation, when applied, constitute a thorough leaching of the soil. The diluted salt sinks together with the water into the soil, then runs into the drainage-ditches. The land becomes arable once again.



The Summer-Camp—Its task and organisation

Recovery and improvement of the land was therefore the task taken over by thousands of young people during the course of last summer. From the 300,000 hectares of the whole project, the area consists of only 2000 hectares.

The minor drain which runs towards the North-East was already completed. But the drainage-canals were still to be prepared: these were to be eight canals of different lengths, with 500m. between each one, on each side of the main drain. The thick line running across the bottom of the map corresponds roughly to the Baghdad-Ramadi road. It also marks the area of work actually carried out. The hills bordering this area on the west are the Abu-Mnaycir hills which gave the project its name.

The work here consists of digging the canals ten metres wide and two metres deep. For this task, spades and pick-axes are given to the volunteers. The ground is alluvial, therefore loose and free from stones. The earth is passed from hand to hand in a sort of iron container, then emptied on the banks of the canal. The volume of earth cleared will thus be 40,000 cubic metres; this represents only half the volume to be cleared. In fact, water starts oozing at a certain depth, and machines become necessary to complete the work. According to the work programme, the daily quantity of earth cleared per person had been set at 1.2 cubic metre, but experience showed that it was in fact 1.5 cubic metre.

The number of people who have spent one week at the camp is estimated at 20,000. This work really deserves the name of collective labour. But the carrying out of such an operation, due to last from the 1st of June up to the 1st of September, necessitates a corresponding framework and organisation.

The Faculties and Secondary schools of Baghdad organised the voluntary work so that the teams were all brought together when reaching the camp on Friday evening. Each of them had 20 members plus a foreman.

There were 30 teams of this kind, and these were changed every week. To these 30 teams of boys living for the whole week at Abu Mnaycir were added other teams with a varying number of girl-students or school-girls, and, occasionally, officials, teachers and intellectuals who came every morning to give their share of work to this communal action.

The camp had a kitchen, 3 dining-rooms, as well as proper medical and sanitary services, to meet the requirements of the troops who were subjected to a real "military" discipline. For the administration of all these, the camp was run by five permanent members, the Camp director and a member responsible for each of the following aspects: work, cultural as well as political activity, stores and accounts. To house the teams, administration and services, 66 marabout tents made up the permanent camp.



Everyone was subjected to a strict time-table:

4,00AM	get up
4,30	gymnastic exercise
4,45	gather in three working-groups
5,00	begin work
5,30	breakfast on the site
7,30	snack on the site
10,00	back to the camp, meetings, discussions and observations, instructions
10,30	washing, dressing, relaxation
12,30	lunch
14,00	compulsory rest
16,00	end of rest period
16,15	gymnastic exercise
16,45	off to the work-site
17,00	begin work
18,30	back to camp, wash and dress
20,00	dinner
21,15	evening-get together
22,00	lights out

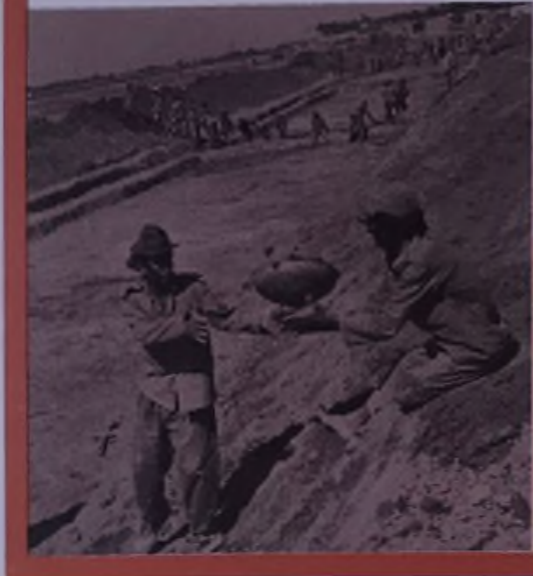
Girls did not pass the night at the camp. They reported at the camp at 6 o'clock in the morning and went home after lunch, early in the afternoon.

The experience—Its object and strength

The reader may probably ask this question: "Was it rational or profitable at all to organise such an enterprise? Would it not have been simpler and more economical to bring in machines which, in a few days, could have performed a task that can only be partly done by the students anyway, for, as already stated, the machines will then be necessary to complete it?" This, of course, is capitalist logic, which we do not accept as according to that belief profit is the basic principle of the whole economy. However, we need only say that this operation is an economical one if only for the fact that there are no salaries to pay.

But such is not the prime purpose of the project. The idea, once introduced, was then applied to the whole country with a much wider object and achieved more promising results: a popular type of education, transforming personalities to prepare them for a socialist society.

Here we see the first serious attempt to put an end to bourgeois ideology based on class-discrimination and on the precedence of intellectual over manual work, which inevitably leads to exploitation of man by man. The first step towards this aim was to bring students occasionally into contact with human labour, and give them a good opportunity to exchange ideas with workmen and peasants during evening gatherings. The goal achieved is the replacement of the bourgeois individualistic ideology by one primarily concerned with solidarity among all workers, who, by the labour of their hands and the work of their brains, will contribute collectively in building the nation.



B A G H D A D

THE SPLENDOUR OF ITS OLD TIMES

Baghdad is not the whole of Iraq, but our country is indeed made famous by this bewitching name. Since its foundation, Baghdad has had a decisive hand in the destiny of this country. It is also Baghdad which greets every visitor. He hears for the first time names which remind him of the Arabian Nights, Harun al-Rashid and his Minister Ja'afar. But how many foreigners have heard of Abu-Nuwas, Mirjan, Mustansir, or are familiar with the history of a country which was for long centuries the seat of Islam and has marked with its stamp Islamic civilization and the history of humanity?

This is why we want to give our readers a glimpse of the history of Baghdad. This will help them to place the names they have heard in their proper context, and to know the origin of the monuments which still survive. We hope to give an historical picture which will help the visitor to ascertain the evolution of the monuments he sees. The present article, we presume, will not suffice to attain this object, and we hope to achieve our aim in two or three subsequent studies.

It is difficult to determine the precise reasons for choosing the site of the new Abbasid capital. However, the choice of the region is quite obvious. It is on the crossroads of the Iraqi plain between Basrah and the sea-route to India, on the one hand, leading to the Mediterranean and Europe; and, on the other hand, the land-route from Central Asia to the Holy places of Arabia. A few kilometres to the South, the Great Issa Canal joined the Tigris to the Euphrates and assured adequate river navigation. Here the twin rivers are nearest to one another, the distance between them only forty kilometres.

On this spot existed an old Aramaean and seasonal market, the name of which is very old as it is mentioned about 1800 B.C. in the times of Hammurabi as "Bagdadu" many years before the coming of Persian domination. It is therefore wrong to assume that this name is of Persian origin.

Nothing remains of old Baghdad, but we have adequate information on its foundation and the first centuries of its existence. Historical documents and chronicles abound. Details have been given by contemporary historians, e.g. Al-Yaqubi (d. 891), and others who visited the city less than a century later, such as the famous Al-Tabari (d. 923). We have also a voluminous history of Baghdad by Al-Khatib Al-Baghdadi who died A.D. 1071. We are thus able to follow the history of this city step by step.

Foundation

In A.D. 749 Abul-Abbas proclaimed himself Caliph at Kufa, after a long campaign of propaganda and agitation in Khorassan and other Eastern provinces of the Caliphate. The reign of the Omayyads in Damascus came to an end, and their princes were ruthlessly massacred, gaining for the new Caliph the

epithet of Al-Saffah, the Slaughterer. He died four years later and was succeeded by his brother, Al-Mansur.

Like many other rulers before him, Al-Mansur wished to found a new capital for his dynasty and chose the site of Baghdad. The foundation stone was erected in A.D. 762. From the farthest provinces of the Empire, architects, artisans and thousands of builders were summoned to complete the task, and it took four years to build the new city. Materials were brought from everywhere for the purpose. A circular plan was adopted, of a diameter of two and a half kilometres. The town had four gates situated at equal distances, the Basrah gate to the South-East, the Khorassan gate to the North-East, the Damascus gate to the North-West, and finally the Kufa gate to the South-West. These gates were designed in such a way as to present an angle, so that anyone who arrived near them has to approach them sideways. The gate then gave way to a lobby (*rahaba*) ending in a second gate situated in the rampart. Then came another short lobby which led to a vaulted principal street, (*taqat*) first designed as a market. Another lobby had to be crossed to arrive at the central square where the mosque, the palace and the government departments were situated.

A ditch surrounded the city, and then double walls 16 metres high, reinforced by towers. The residential quarters were inside the walls and leading to the central square. However, the streets did not end in the square itself but in other streets leading to guard-houses.

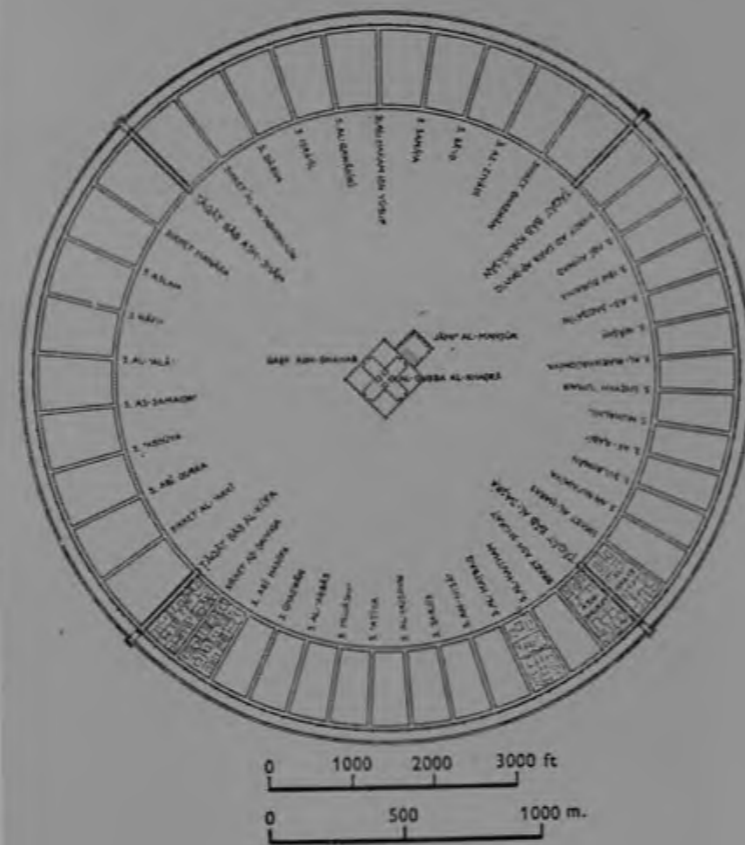
In the centre of the city stood the palace of Al-Mansur, which contemporaries called the Golden Gate in view of its gilt doors, or the Green Dome from the colour of its cupola 50 metres high, and aroused the admiration of all people. The mosque was adjacent to the palace, and it was re-built by Harun al-Rashid. It remained as a meeting-place for the faithful many years after the decay of the Round City. Al-Mansur called his city Madinat al-Salam, the City of Peace, which is one of the names of Paradise in the Koran.

In fact, the city was reserved for the military aristocracy, the State dignitaries and their servants, living in quarters according to their country of origin. The soldiers lived outside the walls. Even the four markets, which rapidly became centres of trouble, were abolished by Al-Mansur. They were moved out the town, especially to Karkh, on the west bank of the Tigris. The average height is under 35 metres, the same as the dams; Karkh, however, at 44 metres is immune to flooding.

The City of Legend

The city extended rapidly. Between the years 773, the outskirts extended to the opposite bank. The Rus-safah quarter was originally a military camp for the army of Al-Mahdi, son of Al-Mansur and heir to the throne. Al-Mahdi built for himself a new palace on the right bank of the river, which he called Al-Khuld, another name for Paradise.

Baghdad gained its world-wide fame in the days of Harun al-Rashid, who reigned for 23 years (786—809).



His empire extended from Tunis, in North Africa, to the steppes of Central Asia. The Byzantine empire suffered humiliating defeats from the hands of the renowned Caliph. His viziers, the Barmecides, were famous for their proverbial tact and generosity. They built many palaces. However, their outstanding success and great influence, and maybe their dubious relations with those hostile to the Abbassids, led to their overthrow in 803.

Baghdad knew great prosperity. Centre of a vast empire, it became the greatest city of the medieval world. Its area was equal to that of Paris at the end of the 19th century. Three bridges joined the two banks, and the population numbered a million and a half. Its only rival was probably Byzantium in the domains of culture and art.

Literature and science soon took a prominent place. Outstanding in the sphere of intellect and religion was the Imam Abu-Hanifah, head of one of the four schools of Islamic jurisprudence, which dominated the orthodox Sunni world. He died in Baghdad at the time of its foundation. Later on a mosque and mausoleum were erected on the site of his tomb. This is the mosque, with the modern minaret, which catches the eye just before the Kadhimain bridge, in the district called after him Al-A'dhamiah, the district of Imam al-A'dham, the Great Imam. The nearby city gate is called also Bab-al-Mu'addham after him.

We must also mention the name of Abu-Nuwas, the celebrated dissolute poet, companion of Harun al-Rashid whose statue stands on the promenade on the river-bank. However, it does not fully evoke this bohemian character who sang of wine and love.

This outrageous luxury created a mystical revolt and a longing for the ways of primitive Islam. Abul-Atahiya (748-808), who was also a poet pensioned by Al-Rashid, rebelled against the dissolute ways of the new capital and called for a return to piety. He was the first mystical poet in Arabic literature.

Another celebrated mystic who lived in Baghdad in this epoch was Ma'ruf al-Karkhi, a sufi of Christian or Sabeian origin. Head of a mystical sect, he was "intoxicated" with God, as it was said of him. He died in 815 and was, and still is, venerated as a saint. His tomb is visited as a shrine.

Philology thrived in Basrah. One of its brightest stars, Al-Asma'i, lived for a while in Baghdad and frequented the court of Harun al-Rashid.

Eclipse

Baghdad was to know cruel tribulations. The Caliph divided his vast domains between his two sons. Amin succeeded to the throne in Baghdad, and Ma'mun governed the eastern provinces. On the death of his father, Ma'mun claimed the Caliphate, and a civil war ensued lasting four years (809—813). He took Baghdad, and his brother Amin suffered death at the hands of soldiers when trying to escape on the Tigris. Tabari says: "Utter destruction and ruin blotted out all the splendours of the city". After five more years of trouble, Ma'mun arrived in 818 and brought a relative calm to Baghdad. He had remained up to that time in his Khorassan capital,

Merv, now in Soviet Turkestan.

City of Science

Under this Caliph, the old splendour of Baghdad was restored. For a whole century, the city knew an unequalled intellectual radiance. While in the West the premature revival of learning sponsored by Charlemagne proved illusory, Islamic civilization flourished and was not affected even by the subsequent degeneration of the Caliphate.

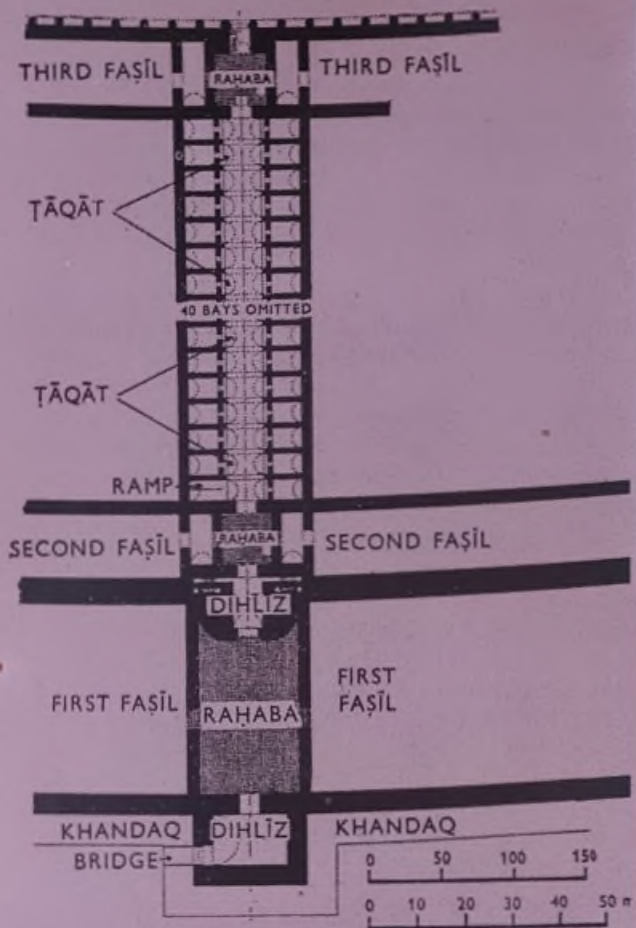
Al-Ma'mun himself was a learned monarch. He ordered the translation of Greek treatises on philosophy, medicine and mathematics. He founded in Baghdad "Beit al-Hikmah", the Institute of Learning, in 830. The famous translator and Nestorian physician, Hunain ibn Is'haq, was one of its teachers. He was later the official and incorruptible physician of the Caliph Mutawakkil. Beit al-Hikmah was also an Academy of Sciences and an astronomical observatory.

However, Ma'mun alienated the esteem of a large section of his subjects, especially at Russafah, who strictly followed the doctrines of the Orthodox masters. He had sympathies for the Shi'ite party and embraced the doctrines of rational Mutazilites. He, and his two successors after him tried to impose these doctrines by force, and instituted to this effect a tribunal of inquisition. This tribunal, fortunately, did not last as long as the one in medieval Europe later on. Al-Mutawakkil abolished it on coming to the Throne in 847; it must however be said that he was far from tolerant of any contrary views.

The most famous victim of the persecutions was the Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal, master of one of the four orthodox schools of jurisprudence. The Caliph al Mu'tasim called for him and ordered him to confess that the Koran was created. He refused categorically and was flogged and thrown into prison. When he died in 855, an immense crowd followed his coffin.

Mu'tasim, the brother of Ma'mun, succeeded to the throne in 833. He was to preside over the decline of the vast empire, which began to shrink in size. Morocco and Andalusia never acknowledged the Abbassid rule. Tunisia, governed by the Aghlabite dynasty had enjoyed a de facto independence since the days of Harun al-Rashid. Tahir, one of Ma'mun's generals and the conqueror of Baghdad was, named governor of the Khorassan province, and drifted gradually from the capital's sway. The Caliph himself relied on Turkish mercenaries for his bodyguard. The conflict between this semi-barbaric soldiery and the population compelled the Caliph to seek a new capital. He chose the site of Samarra, distant 110 kilometres to the North, and established his court in a new city which he built there.

The Caliph became after that the hostage of his guard. The first victim was Mutawakkil, in 861. The Turkish generals became the masters of the empire, removing or killing caliphs at will and placing their puppets on the throne. Al-Mousta'in, dethroned by his bodyguard, took refuge in Baghdad. He fortified the old capital and sustained a one year's siege, which played havoc with the country.



Mosque of Imam Abu Hanifa

Baghdad was not affected by the revolt of the Zendj, the slaves who rose in Basrah in 870—883, in the reign of Mu'tamid. This war reminds one of the Peasants revolt in Germany during the Reformation. The repression, however, may have been less ferocious than that imposed by the German nobility. The rebels were given the opportunity to join the Caliph's army. In 890, the Caliph decided to return to Baghdad and the city became once more the capital of Islam, but the empire shrank still more by the secession of Egypt, under its governor, Ibn Tulun, in 862.

Life in Baghdad, however, went on. Intellectual activity and the cultivation of the religious and secular sciences underwent a new impulse. Mosques became centres of learning. Among the great mystics of this period we should mention Al-Muhassibi, Junayd who died in 910 and his well-known disciple Hallaj. The graves of the master and the disciple are not far from each other.

Towards the end of the century, the famous physician Razi came to Baghdad and founded a hospital. However, this was not the first health establishment created in the city, as hospitals existed in the reign of Harun al-Rashid. The greatest historians of Islam lived in Baghdad during the ninth century: Ibn Saad, the biographer, Al-Baladhuri, who wrote the annals of Islamic conquests, the celebrated *Futuh al-Buldan*.

Tabari (838-923) himself visited Baghdad in his old age. The Syrian poet Abu-Tammam also came to Baghdad during this century. He was famous not only on his own account, but also for his contribution in choosing an Anthology of ancient Arabic poetry. We have to mention as well the tragic death of the poet Ibn al-Mu'tazz, the theorist of what was then the modern school of poetry. His father, son of the Caliph Mutawakkil, was the fortunate rival of Al-Musta'in, who took refuge in Baghdad in 865. Our poet was placed on the throne for only one day, in 908, when his rival Al-Muqtadir was restored, and Ibn al-Mu'tazz was put to death.

Baghdad welcomed the great philosopher Al-Kindi who was born in Kufah and lived in the capital after 850. He was equally famous as a savant, mathematician and musician.

Sheikh Ma'ruf - South side





Outline of the old airport
— — — — — The road to the airport
— — — — — An area of 100 acres
— — — — — An area of 200 acres up to the end of the Chinese period

Abu Nuwas, by Ismail Fattah



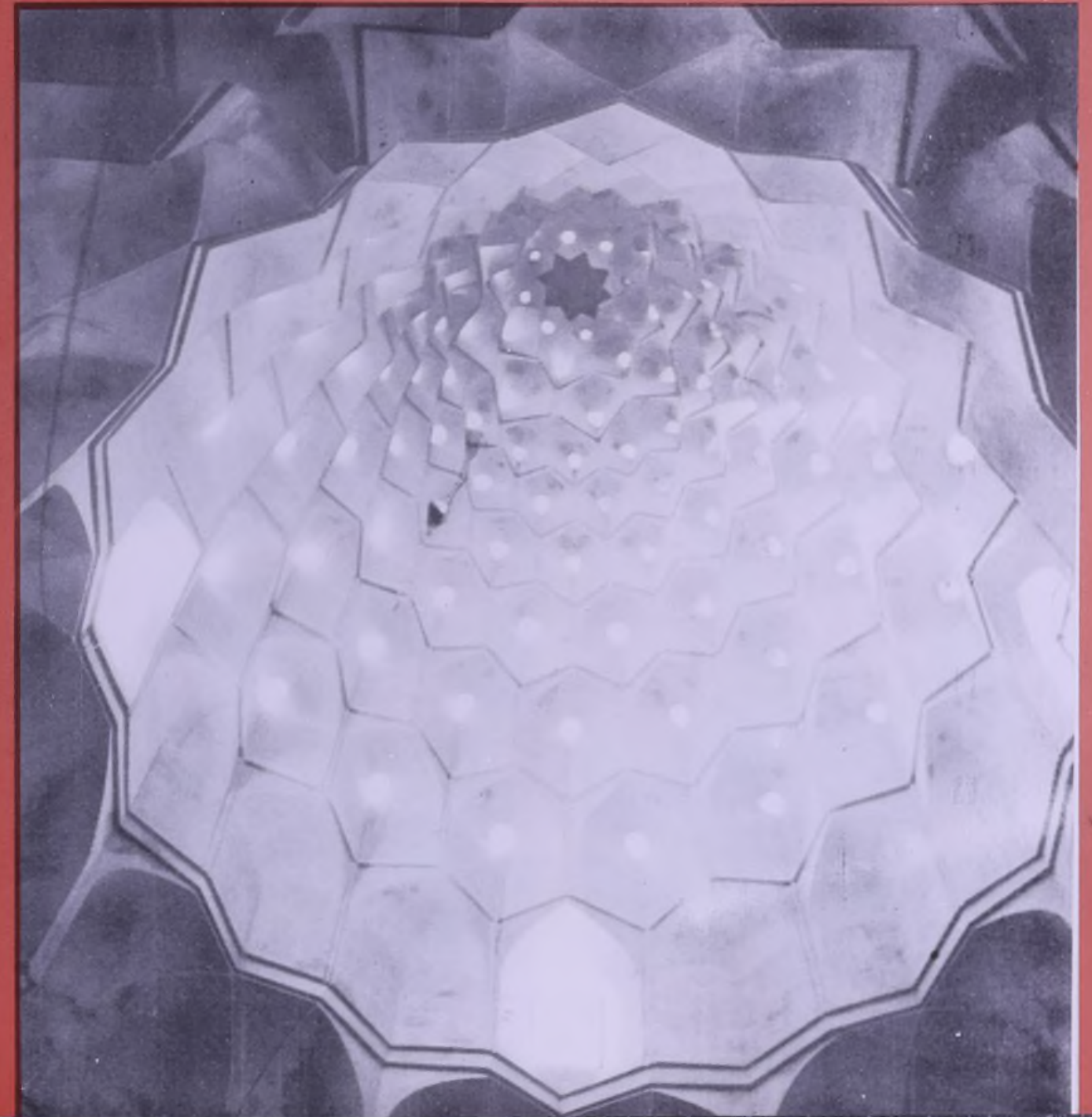
New Splendours

After the return of the Caliphs to Baghdad, the city became once more splendid. Al-Mu'tadhid (892—902) built his palaces on the site of the Barmecides of a century earlier. The vast "Dar al-Khilapha" (palaces of the Caliphate) remained on this site up to the end. It contained several luxurious mansions, e.g. the Pleiads, the Crown, the Tree palace, described faithfully by historians. The latter contained a gold and silver tree, with birds made from precious metal on its branches. Elaborate mechanism made them flutter and sing, a fairy spectacle enthusiastically described by contemporaries. Inside the palaces were also a mosque, a race-course, and a zoological garden similar to that at

Samarra.

Al-Muqtadir was responsible for a move which further accentuated the decline of the Caliphate. He entrusted the rule of his empire to the Captain of the Guard, bestowing on him the title of "Amir al-Umara" Exalted Prince. This official soon became a kind of Mayor of the Palace, supreme in affairs of State, naming and dethroning Caliphs at will. Not long afterwards, power was taken by a foreign dynasty, the Buyids, who came from the mountains of northern Persia. They came to Baghdad in 945 and instituted, in fact, a new form of government, the Sultanate. They held all authority, keeping the Caliph only as a symbol.

"Sitt Zubeyda". The inner face of the cupola



Of all this history, the visitor to modern Baghdad will not find any trace except in the names of avenues and a few statues. He may if he wishes, visit the tombs of some of the famous men enumerated above we have already mentioned the shrine of Abu-Hanifa the great jurist, whose school of thought is followed by most of the Sunnite population. On the right bank of the Tigris, tourists can visit the mausoleum of Sheikh Ma'rif, in the cemetery bearing his name. A little further off is the tomb wrongly ascribed to Sitt Zubaydah, the wife of Harun al-Rashid. This Seljuq monument in fact covers the remains of Zumurrud Khatun, of a later caliph. Its cupola, covered with open cells through which light passes, is indeed elegant. If you find its door closed, don't hesitate to call the guardian.

In this cemetery you will also find the tomb of Junaid. When leaving, you will turn into the street alongside the Karamah Hospital, and then come to lanes in which the government built small houses for poor widows. There you will find the humble tomb of Hallaj. He was under suspicion on account of his outspoken sayings, which perhaps had a political significance, and was executed in 922 under the reign of Muqtadir. Before long, his tomb became an object of pilgrimage.

One might ask why there are no architectural remains of those times? The explanation lies in the use of friable building materials, such as bricks, which could not endure the passing of time, the wars, invasions and other which befell the city. Floods, which were quite frequent, were primarily responsible for this decay. Nevertheless, Baghdad left its mark on Islamic history and world civilization and this mark cannot be extinguished by time or calamities.

Mausoleum of "Sitt Zubeyda" ▼



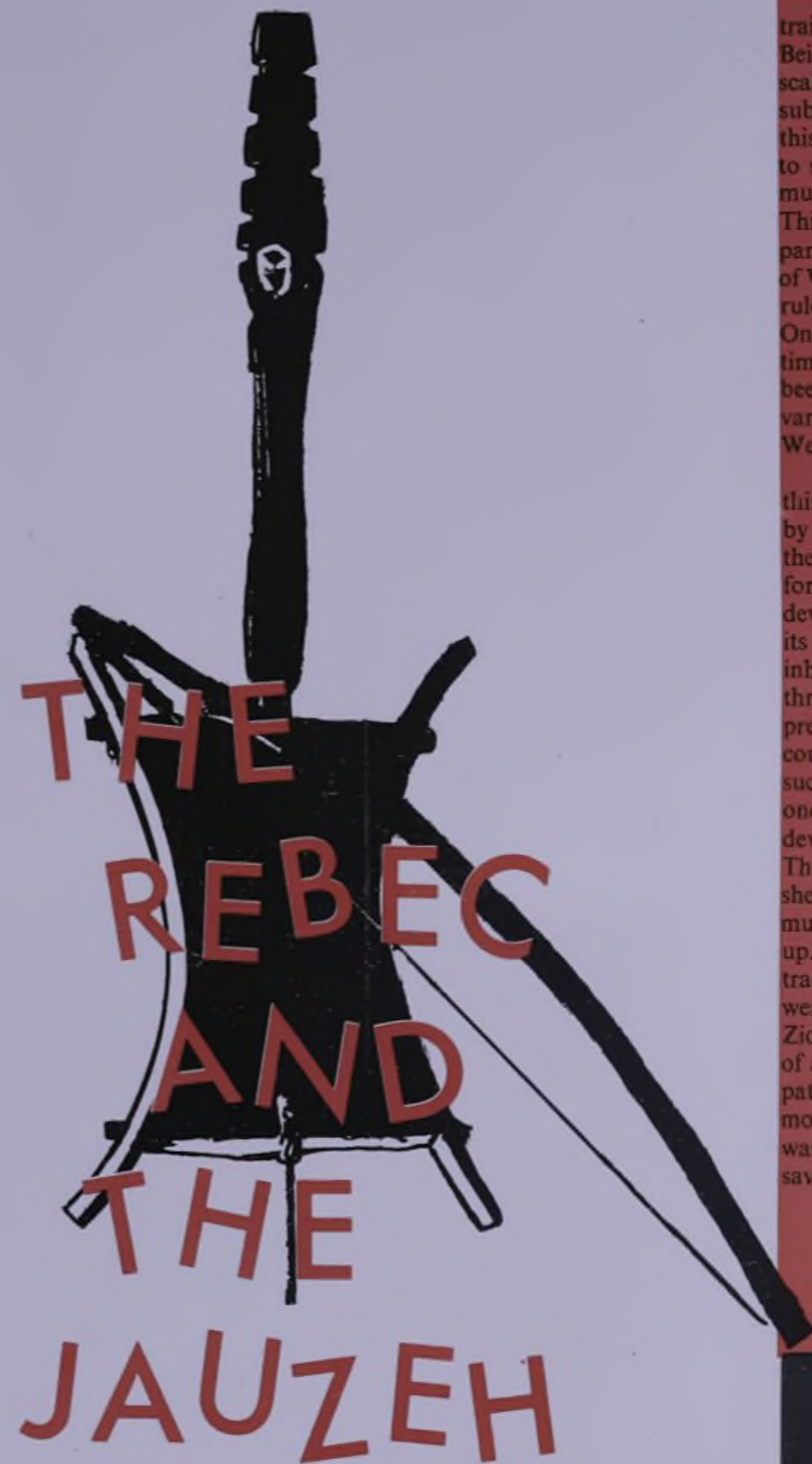
Sheikh Ma'rif al-Karkhi. The entrance ►



▲ Hallaj's mausoleam

Picture taken by Massignon in 1907. In the distance,

▼ Sheikh Ma'rif



The western ear is not well-trained to appreciate Eastern music. Being accustomed only to harmonic scales, it does not take in the subtlety of the oriental scale. For this reason, the European is liable to see nothing more than barbaric music, or the folklore side of it only. This music obviously did not take part in the remarkable development of Western classical music when the rules of harmony were first applied. On the other hand, though sometimes rough in character, it has been able to keep a colourful variety of expression unequalled by Western Music.

In order to preserve and develop this popular heritage — as implied by the term folklore—Baghdad saw the foundation of the Iraqi Institute for Musical Studies exclusively devoted to traditional music and its instruments. This valuable inheritance was in fact seriously threatened. An over-rigid interpretation of Islam, as imposed by a conservative society, gave rise to such a prejudice against music, that one could hardly find any Moslems devoting themselves to this art. The tradition then gradually vanished, except in minority communities who were still keeping it up. In Baghdad, the most famous traditional singers and musicians were Jews. One of the results of Zionism was to deprive the country of an important part of its musical patrimony by causing the exile of most of the Jews. The Institute was thus created with the object of saving and reviving this heritage.

Mutlag el-Farhan



We have asked Mr. Hammoudi l-Wardi, a professor of this institute, to give us a detailed picture of the traditional instruments which are used for the practice and teaching of music at the Institute.

This time, we shall begin with two stringed instruments: the rebec (*rabab*) and the *jauzeh*.

The Rebec

Our regular readers are already familiar with the rebec as details of its manufacture were given in the 5th issue of the magazine. But they probably do not know that the rebec, though a simple one-stringed instrument played with a rough, unimproved bow, is yet the ancestor of the whole violin family. It had its origin long before the Christian area, since it was known by the Assyrians.

Having become the most outstanding bedouin instrument of its kind, the rebec owes its world fame to the Islamic conquests. The Arabs carried it with them, and all the conquered peoples adopted it and transformed it in different ways according to their own traditions. In Latin countries the rebec was used for accompanying the songs of Minstrels. In the western world, this instrument had already been greatly improved by the 15th century. But in the East, the Bedouins are still making traditional use of it as an accompaniment to their monotonous songs.

The small size of its single hair-string does not allow for a variety of expression. It has a narrow compass of half a scale only. For this reason, it is generally played as an accompaniment to a particular type of melody, the *'ataba* sung by the poet who wishes to express praise and admiration, as well as blame and complain about bad luck.

The rebec has no place in an orchestra; it is a solitary instrument, well-suited to accompany the voice of the singer or just the instrumentalist. The instrument shown in the 5th issue of this magazine is very similar to the rebec of Syria and Palestine. The Iraqi traditional rebec does not have the same rectangular shape, but as you may notice, it is waisted. Now-

adays, the most famous rebec player in Iraq is Mutlaq el-Farhan, surnamed Abu Jaysh.

The Jauzeh

The rebec, though a primitive violin, gave rise to a wide range of other stringed instruments. In Iraq, the *jauzeh* made its appearance in the 14th Century. This instrument is no longer primitive and its manufacture requires the skill and precision of a musician-craftsman, but this skill has become very rare nowadays.

The rebec has only one hair-string, while the *jauzeh* has four metalstrings. But what makes it entirely different from its ancestor, is the sound-board made of coconut, which the instrument derives its name from: *jauzeh* means nut, here referred to as Indian nut. This shows that it does not originate in this country, but became familiar following the intercourse between Iraq and India. Some musicians thought that its oily wood would make the vibrations reverberate in such a way that it was worth taking advantage of this quality. Let us remember here the late player of



this instrument who was able to produce sounds that a well-trained ear could hardly distinguish from those of a violin.

The *jauzeh*, is made by cutting both ends of the nut and removing its pulp. The smaller part is then covered with a skin (usually from a sheep); this skin is stuck directly on the nut, but the other end remains open. The finger-board is fixed in the same way as with the rebec; it is, however, longer, the strings being about 18 inches long, or approximately 45 cm.

The instrument has 4 strings tuned in sol, la, ré, sol (G—A—D—G). To play it, you should hold it like the rebec, but in a very special way: the instrumentalist moves his bow across the strings and back, using his other hand to turn the instrument so that the right string meets the bow. We would point out that the bridge is quite round.

The rebec and *jauzeh* are also different in that they cannot be used for the same purpose. The rebec is a solo instrument, whereas the *jauzeh* is played in an orchestra, never by itself.

The word "ensemble" is more suitable than "orchestra" to define the musical group where the *jauzeh* fits in. The most famous ensemble of its kind is the *tchalghi* of Baghdad, quite frequently appearing on television; it usually consists of the following: the singer who is the most important member is accompanied on the *Santour*, a kind of Zither, then come the *jauzeh*, the *daff* (a drum), and the *dumbuq* (a pottery drum) in shape rather like a bottomless jug.

There may be other percussion instruments as well. The ensemble being traditional so is the music. The repertory mainly consists of the *maqamat* and old Baghdadi melodies which still remain popular. You will never hear the *jauzeh* accompanying modern, up-to-date songs.

Whether you would like the rebec or the *jauzeh*, you can get them both easily if you wish. The Folklore Centre offers them to you at its own shop. These unusual objects may decorate your wall or table in a very



special way, and they are designed and presented to you for this purpose. But please do not be surprised if you find it hard to get any harmonious sounds out of them. The strings and paint covering them make them quite unfit for that purpose, but if you want to use them as ornaments, please take them by all means. They have the true appearance of a real instrument. However, if you are looking for a musical instrument to play, please make it clear and consult an instrumentalist.





A SUNNY DAY IN THE MARSHES OF THE SOUTH

The revolution, in its determination to achieve a radical transformation of the economical and social conditions in the countryside, has undertaken a very important task. In that part of the country unchanged since earliest times, machines have been introduced, but that is not all: people now possess the means to allow them to make their own destiny and face the challenge of the modern world. Since W. Thesiger's book "The Marsh Arabs", in which he described so vividly the life of Arabs in the Marshes, a great many events have taken place in the life of these people which have contributed to their liberation.

We now present to our readers the experience of a young Iraqi journalist, Samir Hanna, exactly as published by him in number 243 of the weekly magazine "Workmen's Consciousness" December 1973. The photographic reporting is also made by him.

The Spirit of the Revolution penetrates into the Floating Village.

Early one morning, at half past five I set off from Basrah northwards to the village of Umm Shwajj, situated right in the Marsh.

After an hour's drive on an asphalted road we took an unmade road but discovered shortly that it was obstructed. Part of it had fallen away, and a car was stuck in the mud. Workers repairing the road informed us that the repair would be finished in two hours' time. We were therefore compelled to go back.

Al-Huwayr-Village of Boats

I decided then to make the best of those two hours and visit Huweyr village. The village, which is situated at the mouth of the Hammar lake, is well-known for its "dock-yards". The distinctive canoes, the only means of transport in the Marshes of the South, are in fact made there. This industry is indeed the main resource of the inhabitants of this village. Men, women and children, all help in the construction and repair of the boats.



In the marshes, the generic name of these boats is "mashhoof" (plural: *mashahif*). They are slender and crescent-shaped. There are many different types, each one with a particular name according to its size and function. The *g'ud*, for instance, is used for long circuits.

When our car reached a spot surrounded with water, they told me: "Here is where the marshes begin. At last, I had come to the area I longed to see so much and which constitutes the major part of the Southern region of my homeland. My dream had now come true.

And now, we are in the *mashhoof* which takes us to the village. We pass along narrow canals covered on the surface with thousand varieties of aquatic plants having particular shapes and bright colours. Enormous stretches of marsh turned into real papyrus and reed fields and in the background appeared from time to time the outline of one or more wild boars.

The Marsh-inhabitants, their life and work

Uncle Abbas, who punts our boat, is a man with a dark complexion, about 40 years old. He tells us that unusual animals and a great number of poisonous snakes live in this region. Yet, the main food of the inhabitants is fish, which, small or large are so abundant in the marsh-waters.

Abbas then begins to sing charming rural laments, and we are filled with delight. Suddenly, I saw children standing on the prow of their boat. They were holding a harpoon called *fala* to be used for fishing. They carefully watch the surface of the water, and when they catch sight of a fish, with a swift movement and without hesitation pierce it with the harpoon.

At a certain period of the year shoals of small fish appear called *Khshayen*; these are caught in the marsh in a very odd way, and... at night! A lamp is placed at the stern of the *mashhoof* to attract

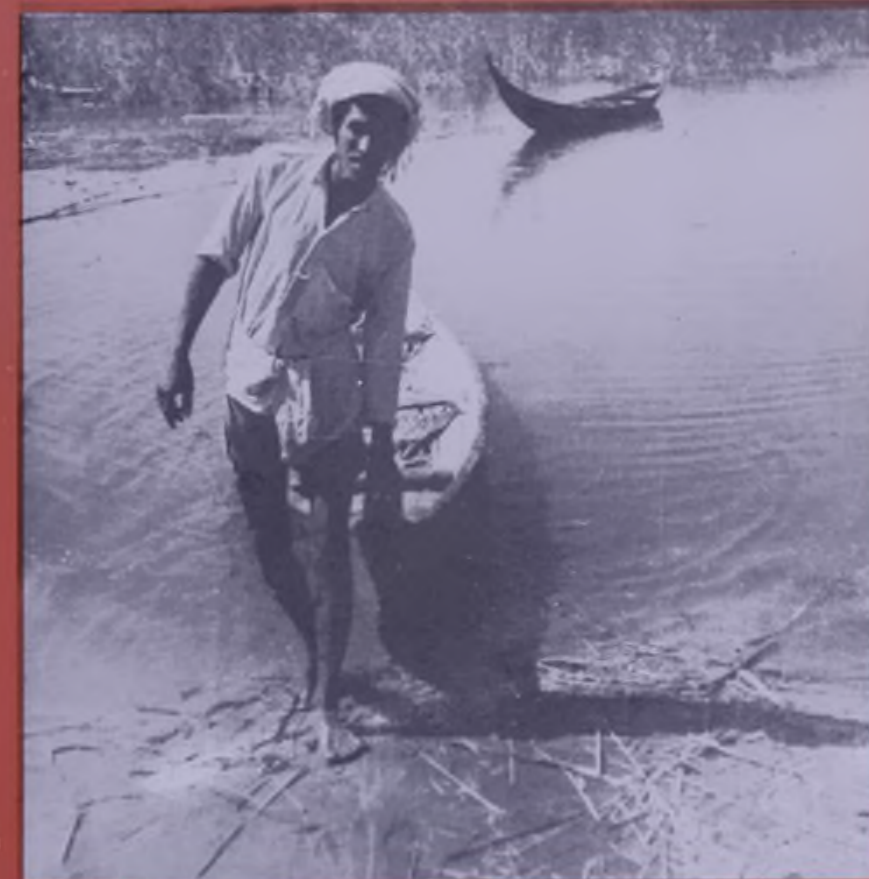
the fish. The fishermen then shriek and the fish jumps from the water into the boat.

A Desert of water

The Marshes of the South cover an area of about six thousand square miles, and reach a depth of 4 to 5 feet.

Both papyrus and reed grow in the major part of the marsh-area. But in the lagoons where no papyrus or reed can be seen, the depth may exceed 5 metres. The reed is used for the making of mats and bundles which are made into pillars.

In the morning, women go out to cut and gather the reeds, and then sell them to the paper-mill in Basrah. In most floating villages, the children and young men pass their time in making mats and basket-work. I noticed that they were excellent workers, taking their task very seriously. But one felt sorry to see them walking bare-footed, or swimming naked in the midst of buffaloes.



The Spirit of the Revolution

The spirit of the revolution has penetrated even to this primitive place. The people there are beginning to be conscious of their miserable condition. Schools have been opened for the children of the villages, and floating dispensaries are at their disposal. Their daily life is now filled with new elements making them happy and the bright smiles on their faces show that they look hopefully to the future. Shaalan, who teaches reading and agriculture at the Umm Shwaj primary School, confirms this to us. He himself prefers to live and work here in the marsh, for he belongs to the place and is well-acquainted with the conditions there.

In his school, there are 210 boys and 50 girls. The intermediate school is 3 kms from the village, and the students get there by boat. This is too great a distance for the girls so they find it very hard to pursue their studies.



"In the morning you will not find any woman in the floating reed-huts. If you look for them you will find them at work. Shaalan is still speaking — "A man wants a woman who works just like him."

Abbas Mnayjel, who is listening as he punts along, goes on: "If a man wants to marry, he needs one thousand dinars or a sister, in exchange"

In the village of Jidma which is on the border of the marshes, I recall this brief conversation with Abdel Bari, who was punting the boat. He is a fisherman and a hunter.

- Abdel Bari, have you been to Baghdad?
- Well, no, I know neither Baghdad nor Basrah.
- Why?
- I have no identity booklet, and if I go there I am afraid they will arrest me.
- What is your work?
- I catch birds, moor-hen and fish.
- You are married?
- Yes, I am proud to be. I loved my cousin, so I declared my reserved rights, danced the *hausa*, and took her.

In the marsh-area where oil is prospected for, I saw children running after the amphibious vehicles of the National Oil Company; this is something entirely new to them. They hear the terrible noise of drillers disturbing the calm waters. They are intelligent, lovable, generous and smile openly at me, at you, and at all those who visit their area. But they also smile at the revolution, expecting a great deal from it.



Should Israel be the result of the strenuous efforts from the part of mystical pioneers, decided to make the earth of their ancestors to flourish again? At least that is what the Zionist propaganda pretends. Thus it intends to gain all sympathy, and to fill the Jews of the whole world with enthusiasm for this enterprise.

The study of Lotfallah Soliman, from which we reproduce here an extract, was first published last year but it has not lost its actuality. It shows the real origin of Zionism and of the State of Israel. This study also dismantles its mystification. Capitalism, in its heydays, pretended to justify its colonial conquests in the name of the great civilising principles, while in reality, it was a question of systematic enterprise of plunder. The creation of the Zionist state served the intention of the capitalistic States, to ensure the permanency of this plunder.

From one imperialism



It was then the epoch when the European Imperialism had directed its eyes towards the Middle East and had, ingeniously engaged in a fine party with the Ottoman Sultan intent to gain positions of power—now through pressures now through negotiations—within the plainly declining Empire. It is at this time, whence Egypt had been transformed into an arsenal, that the "project" out of an Arab Empire independent from the Turkish Empire, had actually emerged and taken form, presenting itself to History, as the dynamic heir and successor to the ailing "Sick Man". It is well known how, after having

ISRAEL. IMPERIALISTIC ENTITY

... to another



Europe Intervenes

It wasn't Theodore Herzl who conceived Israel as the "strategic project" any more than it was the Congress of Basel; and his realisation wasn't due to the services rendered by the Chemist Weizmann to the Allies during the first World War. The "strategic project" of Israel goes further back to the early beginnings of what the historians shamefacedly call: the Eastern Question.

conquered the entire region, the armies of Mohammed Ali, the Master of Egypt and the Nasser of that time, were ready and well prepared to pursue the defeated Ottoman Armies well inside Turkey, had it not been for a coalescent Europe, with England at its head, intervening to put an end to an "Adventure" that would have sealed off the entire region of the Middle East to his colonialistic penetration.

At that time, in the imperialist hot-beds in London and Paris it was realised that, in order to keep the Arab World open for European colonisation, they had at once to reject and render impossible, at any rate, the creation of a united Arab Ensemble which could be more dynamic and more viable than the then existing Moslem Ensemble. It is then, and in this objective, that the "Strategic Project of Israel" had been conceived.

In Paris the "Strategic Project of Israel" had been understood and perceived as a recognition of its protectorate over Eastern Catholicism. With the partition and the despoilment of the remains of the Ottoman Empire the French project was to find a concrete elaboration in the French Mandate over the non-Palestinian part of Syria and on the creation within this territory, of an entity with a catholic majority viz.: Lebanon.

The Jewish Kingdom

In London, the "Strategic Project of Israel" had been conceived, above all, as a "restoration of the Jews". On 29 March 1939, the London Times published a memorandum under the significant headline in which it presented the return of the Jews to Palestine as the natural corollary of the "solution to the Eastern Crisis".

Commenting on this event, Fr. J. Hajjar wrote in his book on "Europe and the Destinies of the Near East (1815-1848)": "This conjuncture—three months before the signing of the Quadruple Alliance—was a sign of the times. By favouring the establishment of Abraham's Sons in Palestine, the protestant governments fulfilled one of their international obligations by bringing peace back to the Levant."

The memorandum on the "Restoration of the Jews" was soon taken up by the entire English Press. One newspaper said that England should very simply buy Palestine. Another newspaper saw the establishment of a "Jewish Kingdom" in that area as an advantageous solution for all the European Powers in opposition with the Turkish Sultan and Viceroy Mohammed Ali." The GLOBE wrote that the realisation of this "Jewish Restoration" in Palestine, was "the most beautiful diamond of the English Crown." The MORNING CHRONICLE, which represented the view point of Palmerston, affirmed that the creation, or rather the restoration, of such a "Jewish Kingdom" is a necessity of the Eastern Policy which would beneficially serve the interest of the United Kingdom. (J. Hajjar, p.333).

But no sooner than it left the world of the Press and the street manifestations in London, the question entered the domain of diplomacy. If most historians and politicians wouldn't have deduced their analysis from the Israeli fact in Herzl's book and from the Basel Conference, they would have discovered in numerous works the text of the diplomatic despatch sent on the 11 August 1839 by the British Prime Minister Lord Palmerston to his Ambassador in Turkey. It is not the Balfour Declaration but the Palmerston Despatch which constitutes the first diplomatic document in favour of the "installation of the Jews in Palestine."

The Palmerston Despatch

The analysis of this Despatch allows to situate in its reality "the Strategic Project" and "the political fact Israel". Palmerston begins to notice the existence among the scattered Jews in Europe of a conviction that the time has come for their return to Palestine: this desire was favourably received and everything seemed to indicate that its realisation came closer... It was necessary that the Sultan encouraged the establishment of the Jews in Palestine: not only, it would bring him material profit, but also to counteract eventual expansionist schemes of Mohammed Ali or of his successors. So Palmerston ended his despatch by recommending confidentially to his ambassador, to present this considerations to the Ottoman Government and to advise the encouragement of the return of European Jews to Palestine, in order to counteract "the Egyptian danger".



It is in the context of this "Strategic Project" that the ideas and actions of Herzl, the founder of Zionism, have been inserted, to counterpoise the existing antisemitism in Western-Europe (the Dreyfus Affaire) and more widely Eastern-Europe, and thus, also the Congress of Basel, the Balfour Declaration, the British Mandate over Palestine, the UNO Vote creating the State of Israel the 15 May 1948, and finally the passage of the Zionist movement, from the English tutelage to the American.

Nixon has taken the succession of Palmerston, but the Zionist movement, the British Mandate, the State of Israel under American protection they are only instruments which gave a concrete form to an imperialistic "Strategic Project" that never changed its significance, though it has been more defined actually (Israel, a pushing lance of an aggressive policy in the Middle East).

The authors of the drama must be defined objectively, taking into consideration this strategic project of imperialism. The mastermind: imperialism. The instrument: the Jew, victim of European antisemitism or enamoured with Zion. The victim: the Arab peoples and among them the Palestinians. The objective: to make impossible the realisation of the Arab united movement of anti-imperialistic contestation.

From this renewed examination of reality, the field of the anti-imperialistic action has been enlarged. The Palestinian resistance is no more an isolated fact, but integrated into the whole of the Arab resistance.

The Palestinians are no more "strangers" in Egypt, Syria, Jordan and Libanon. And the patriotic, democratic and revolutionary forces in those lands, cease to be "a supporting front", to become, together with the Palestinian forces, integrated parts of a global counter-project: the revolution on the scale of the Arab world.

ARAB CALLIGRAPHY



الكتابة

This decorative panel is made up of arabesques used for architectural motifs and illustrates the evolution of Arab calligraphy.

We produce for our readers an article published in 1973 by "Total-Information" about an Iraqi calligrapher, Ghani Al-Ani. The reproduction of some of his works may, in spite of the absence of colour, give the reader an idea about the artistic variety in Arab graphics.

A POTTER OF IMADIYA



Man is the sole living creature who stores liquids outside his own body. He first solved the problem of a receptacle by using a natural one such as a shell, for example; and then got on to pottery, and in the end glass.

Ethnographers say that pottery-making came before basket-weaving, indeed the latter at least partly derived from it. The utensil was shaped in reeds which would be dipped in clay to make it leak-proof and dried in the sun. Experience proved that the clay could do without its reed framework.

It is probable also that pottery receptacles supplanted stone as being easier to handle.

Pottery plays an essential role in archaeology because dates can be deduced from types. The appearance of pottery characterises the neolithic age, towards the end of which the technical skill of the potter had become very considerable.

It is said that the finest of this ancient pottery comes from Morocco. In Australia and Oceania there is none at all. On the other hand it is abundant in the ancient civilisations of Iraq and distinguished there for its quality.

In our day pottery continues to be made in several regions of the country: Imadiya, Mosul and its environs, Erbil, Tuz Kurmatu, (where it is familiar to our readers, see our issue No. 4) Baghdad where it has declined, Hilla and Kerbela. I would like to call attention to two schools which have distinctive characteristics: Tuz and Imadiya.

I happened to meet in Baghdad a potter who comes from Imadiya carrying on his work. He is named Marbina Daoud and lives now in Doura, in the southern suburbs. He has to live so far out or he would not have got permission to set up a kiln.

"Does the artist reveal or does he sacrifice his inner self when he exhibits?" During each of his exhibitions, Ghani Al-Ani asks himself this question. Last April, before the walls decorated with his works at the Middle East Students' Center*, he raised the question even more forcefully as it was a matter of showing through 40 of his works the essence of Arab calligraphy.

Is calligraphy merely a means of expression or an art? For Ghani Al-Ani, this is the focal point of the debate. His immediate reply echoes that of one of the great masters of Arab calligraphy, Al Musta'Sini: "Calligraphy is a spiritual composition expressed materially." He discerns in this definition a kinship with contemporary art. "Just as Al Musta'Sini places the emphasis on the means of expression directly evolving from the creative will, transcending material things, one finds that modern artists also insist on this aspect particularly in view of the conquests of the machine as in photography and they worry about its considerable role in the conception of artistic form".

"Some individuals claim that photography is only a mechanical means of expressing an artistic idea and not an art in itself. Others maintain that it is an art in its own right. Since its creation, Arab calligraphy has stirred up the same controversy. Either it is only a technical process used to express a purely intellectual idea or else it is an artistic creation by itself."

"But if photography raises the question of the use of an instrument, it is quite another with regard to calligraphy since Islam forbids all representational art".

"This restriction does not seem to bother the Mussulman artist who has enlarged the scope of artistic creation by shaping new forms from letters and lines. And calligraphy even encourages the artist to freely express his personality through an original form, sometimes circular or square, occasionally in the shape of a bird or a boat. This is what leads to a true artistic creation."

Ghani Al-Ani talks of his art as



▲ Here the artist has arranged his signs in a boat-like pattern. Part of the graphic signs are used to convey the message, the other links the letters according to the artist's creativity.

This panel uses Sūlis writing. Symmetry is achieved through the arrangement of letter patterns and the sentence chosen by the artist.



would a poet. He explains how pure geometry and musical composition are compatible with each other. He points out the reeds all cut differently which enable him to stroke a variety of curves and the palm wood several inches thick with which he began the calligraphy of the Koran. The different collections of diplomatic letters are masterpieces of harmony wherein each letter of the alphabet is treated separately and develops progressively into an embroidered effect.

Al-Ani began his apprenticeship at around age ten while he listened to his father talk about the reed and watched him cut it in order to

stroke arabesques. During his apprenticeship with one of the most well-known calligraphers in Baghdad, he was slowly initiated into an art that he continues to practice. After having taught at the School of Architecture in Baghdad from 1962-67, he came to France for the first time where he gave lessons in calligraphy to French students in Aix-en-Provence. After briefly returning to Iraq, he received a scholarship from his government and came back to Paris where he has several irons in the fire: a law thesis on literary and artistic property as well as a thesis on Plastic Art concerning the notion of artistic creation in calligraphy and Arab mural decoration.



would not have got permission to set up a kiln.

— What sort of pottery are you making?

— Jugs and jars. I like making them sometimes in the form of a large jug surmounted by little ones. And the same with jars.

— You model figures, animals?

— No. I have never tried. I should be afraid to attempt this kind of work for which the potters of Tuz are so famous.

— How long does it take to make a pot?

— Sometimes only a few minutes, but they vary according to the shape. I put them in the kiln after drying them off in the sun.

— How long do they stay there?

— At least six hours.

— And they come out perfect?

— Oh, no. Sometimes most of them are spoilt.

— How did you learn your trade?

— I learnt it from my father and he from his. Our family have always been potters.

— Why did you come to Baghdad? Because of a depression?

— No, I have never been short of work. Customers used to come of their own accord to Deir Gani, a village some two hours from Imadiya. I knew the craft was doing well in the capital, wished myself good luck, and installed myself there. The result was even better than I expected. Every week I sell thirty to fifty pieces, sometimes a hundred.

— Who come to buy them?

— Foreigners first of all, and then special customers.

— Where do you get your clay?

— From nearby, but it isn't as good as Imadiya clay.

— Do you add anything to it?

— I do add something which I have discovered recently. Before that I prepare the clay by washing it thoroughly and adding salt.

— I have noticed that you paint your wares in oils. Don't you know that simple wares like this are generally thought better without it?

— That's what people who know tell me. But the public like them painted so I am stuck between taste and making a profit. It is up to people like you to educate the public.

— That's true. Have you any new forms in mind?

— Yes, indeed, I have plenty of ideas and intend to develop them.

I took my leave, suggesting he should be on his guard against imitating, and stop spoiling his masterpieces by painting them.

