

# Iraq Today

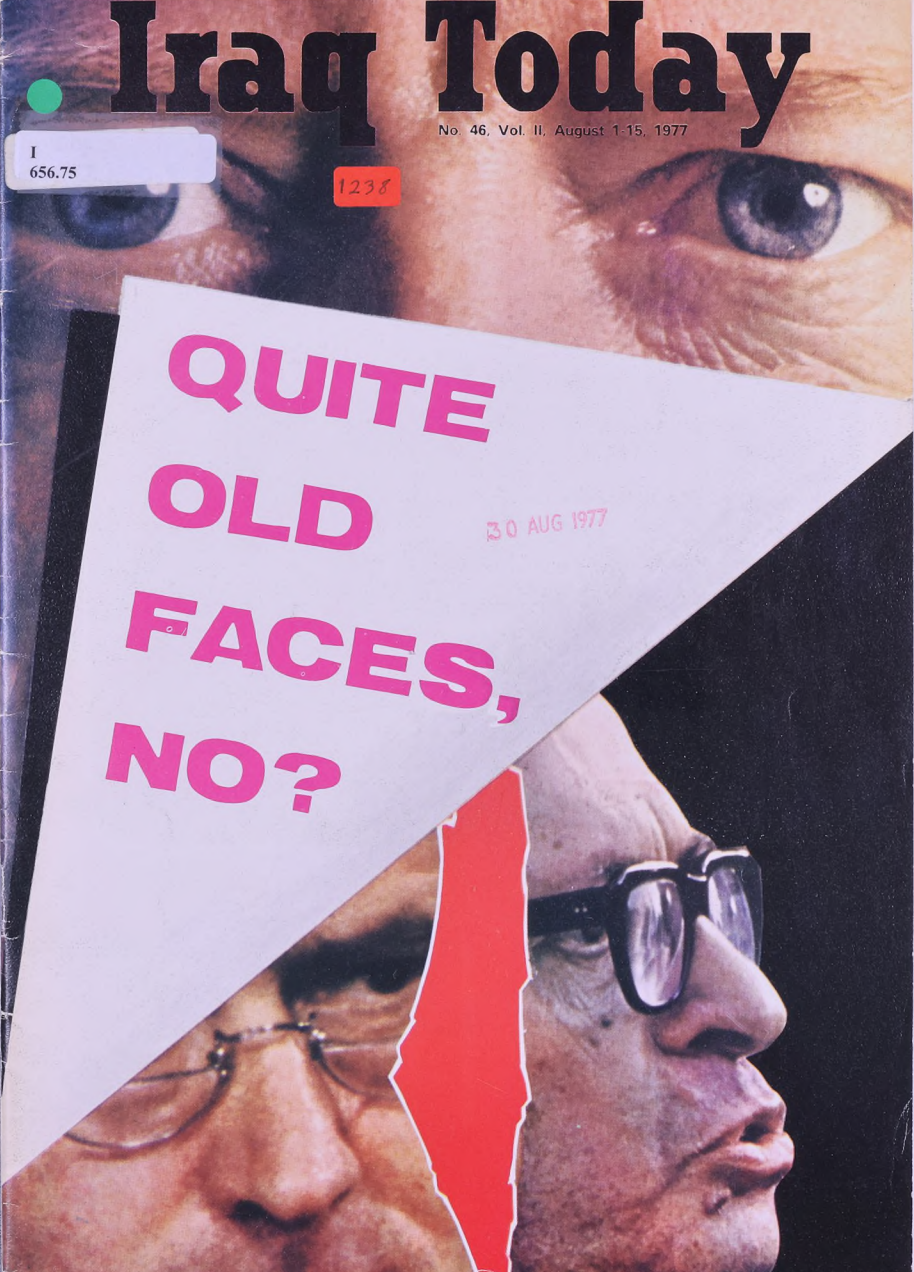
No. 46, Vol. II, August 1-15, 1977

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30 AUG 1977





Fortnightly Magazine  
No. 46, Vol. II  
August 1-15, 1977

published by the  
Ministry of Information,  
Directorate General of  
Information,  
Baghdad, Iraq

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Depository number at the National Library — 226/1976 (al-Hurra Printing House — Baghdad, Iraq)

Correspondence to be addressed to:  
Iraq Today magazine  
Directorate General of Information,  
Baghdad, Iraq

Designer: Walid Sheet  
Photos: INA

## EDITORIAL

# Another Flying Dutchman Called Vance

**F**ollowing in the footsteps of his predecessors, notably Rogers and Kissinger, Cyrus Vance, about to roam the earth many times over, will never be standing still and his hectic pursuit is to make the world stand still.

The preservation of American interests is usually sugar-coated with such palatable phrases as peace in the Middle East. Some Arabs gulp the American prescription under the illusion that it is the best cure for their ailments. But the American Secretaries of State come to this area to perform, among other things, the task of "Israeli" ambassadors at large. Thus they relieve "Israel" of the necessity of being represented in some Arab capitals. They invariably identify American interests with "Israeli" security and go out of their way to reduce the already shrinking Arab demands to a degree so unmanageable that the time so wasted could be diverted to time gained by the Zionists. Time is a factor much relied upon. To deepen the sense of irrevocability where the fait accompli acquires legal dimensions, and expansion takes on the garb of right.

The secretaries of State-cum-"Israeli" ambassadors, enter certain Arab capitals preceded by a dramatic suspense that is entertained by some Arabs who never reach the state of disappointment with the U.S. necessary to work out a purely Arab solution.

Inside "Israel" itself the dramatic perspective becomes complete, for there is no lack of false alarms to the effect that the wandering American might find his moorings on the Arab shore. Prolonged discussions and yet more trips would gradually quieten the fears of the few sceptics there and prove that the man had only one destination: "Israel", and all ports lead to it. Should the American wanderer start with high sounding moral postures such as even-handedness and other additions to the flimsy vocabulary of appeasement, the pessimistic "Israelis" would in the exact reverse in the meaning is duly applied. It would take him only a few scores of journeys to the area to arrive where he began: the interests of "Israel" and those of the U.S. are one and the same thing. Yet there are still some Arab leaders clinging to the hair's breadth of difference between the two sets of interests and rely on their persuasiveness, suavity, amiability and subdued threats which frighten nobody, that perhaps on this visit or the forthcoming one or the umpteenth, they might be able to make that difference a little bit wider and dislodge the U.S. a little bit from its full support of "Israel".

Those Arab leaders have their moments of rejoicing too: has not such president voiced his disapproval of such "Israeli" action? Those who would reply "Yes, but has not that same president underlined his disapproval by augmenting the aid to Israel?" are called cynics. With confidence confronted with the realities some Arab leaders resort to wishful thinking and slender those who are awake to the dangers.

Secretary of State Rogers came up with the Rogers plan. Henry Kissinger surprised the world with his shuttle diplomacy. Cyrus Vance is trying hard to find a label to his time-consuming efforts, for one is afraid that they might go down the drain before they are given a name.

The new flying American differs from the legendary Dutchman in that he does not seek atonement for a past sin. There are others who persistently sin and the Arabs who are required to atone, or if we should avoid the theological terminology we would say that for crimes perpetrated against the Jews it is the Arabs who are punished and for crimes perpetrated by the Zionists it is again the Arabs who pay,



## President Bakr Stresses Need for Medical Research

On July 28 President Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr visited the College of Medicine of Baghdad University and discussed with its dean and professors matters related to the means and procedures of fulfilling the aspirations of the Revolution in the field of medical education.

President Bakr instructed the professors and students to de-

vote more time for scientific research in all branches of medicine and to contribute to, and to participate in as many scientific conferences and symposia, which are held inside and outside Iraq, as possible. The President also listened to the proposals of the teaching staff.

**At the College of Dentistry**

President Bakr also visited, on

August 4, the College of Dentistry where he received its dean and professors.

Speaking at the college the President emphasized that the vast changes that were taking place in the political, cultural and socio-economic life of the country and changes that were being brought about by scientific and technological advancement in the world, call for relentless efforts on our part for our own development and progress. He said, "This is the aspiration of the Revolution which seeks welfare and prosperity for our people".

He also called for concentration of all efforts and potentials at all levels to accelerate the pace of progress.

During his visit to both colleges the President was accompanied by the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Dr. Mohammed al-Mashat.

The President pays personal attention to the promotion of medical services in the country. He always directs that all possible facilities be made available to the citizens so that health services reach every house, particularly in the countryside. Guided by the principles of the leading party, the Arab Baath Socialist Party (ABSP), the President is very keen to see a healthy generation grow up to play its role in the process of building the new Iraq.

The ambitious five-year-plan (1976-80) has laid strong emphasis on the development of medical services and special programmes and projects have been undertaken to achieve this end.

In a recent visit to al-Mustansiriyah University, President Bakr stated that the leadership was giving special attention to gifted and outstanding students in the medical field on the grounds that they formed the nucleus of future teachers and leaders of science and production.



Liberation struggle is the only road

By our Political Commentator

## The Stumbling Block to M-E Peace

**C**arter Administration has disapproved of Begin-Dayan government's decision to legalise three more Zionist settlements in occupied West Bank.

At a news conference held in Washington on July 28, the U.S. President was asked if the "Israeli" government decision was a "stumbling block to Middle East negotiations". Mr. Carter replied, "Yes".

Also the U.S. news media recently came out with sharp criticism of Begin on the issue. The Washington Post, New York Times, Baltimore Sun and Chicago Tribune wondered if the U.S. foreign policy options were being limited by "irresponsible actions" of the "Israeli" leaders.

The Washington Post described the Begin decision as "reckless, provocative and indefensible". The paper added that the "decision amounts to a frontal assault on the American effort to arrange a settlement" and was "wholly unrealistic and incompatible with any serious effort to work out a lasting settlement in the Middle East".

The Post editorial commented: "Coming on the heels of Prime Minister Menachem Begin's warm reception in Washington, the decision con-

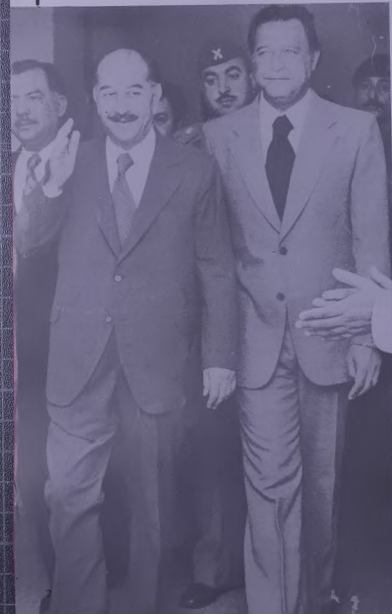
veys an unmistakable aura of sticking a thumb in Jimmy Carter's eye".

The issue of legalising the illegal racist ghettos, set up by the Zionist zealots, has pricked the conscience of the otherwise pro-Zionist news media of the United States. And the U.S. Administration whose blessings the Zionists are enjoying in all their illegal acts, has at long last found one of their actions unacceptable. But is it a question of one particular action of a prattling government at a particular time? The question is not as simple as that. Nor is it as isolated as that.

Since the occupation of Palestine in 1948 the "Israeli" leadership; from Ben Gurion to Begin, has consistently been flouting the counsel of enlightened world public opinion with respect to the Arab Palestinians. And the U.S. Administration, from Truman to Carter, has unthinkingly been abetting these alien racist and aggressive settlers in Arab homeland. Over the years the inherent racist nature of settler-colonialism revealed all its ugly features. And now even the Americans, or at least some of them, feel uncomfortable to look at the Frankenstein.

By paying lip service to the Arab cause the Americans can hardly atone for the sin they com-

President Bakr and Dr. Mohammed Saibeh al-Mashat, Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, at the College of Dentistry



mitted in 1920 when Woodrow Wilson's Administration endorsed the Balfour Declaration. Carter's disapproval of Begin's decision to legalise Zionist settlements in Palestine is an instance of such lip service the Americans have been paying to the Arab cause from time to time. But they have been avoiding tackling the crux of the problem. They refuse to recognise the hard reality that the so-called "state of Israel" is itself an illegal settlement in the heart of Arab homeland — a racist ghetto legalised by U.S. Administration — and this ghetto Zionist entity as a whole serves as the "stumbling block" to Middle East peace. The history of "Israel's" three decades of existence substantiates this conclusion. And U.S. connivance at all stages of that history, which is the history of genocide, mass murder and war of aggression, is an admitted fact.

The attention of the Arabs could not be diverted from this fact by any brand of diplomatic manoeuvrings, be it Trumanesque, Eisenhower Doctrine, Texan gangsterism or Nixonian hypocrisy. And Carter has yet to prove that his brand of diplomacy is any different from his predecessors'.

During the last eight months in office Carter has only succeeded in confusing the issue by his feelers-from-top diplomacy. Five months ago he was talking about substantive issues like "Israeli" withdrawal and Palestinian homeland. And now he is keeping quiet and his emissary, Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, is unnecessarily shuttling around in the Middle East to find solution to the procedural matters. As if procedural knots stood in the way of solving the substantive issues. The issues that have already been settled by the United Nations are being reopened only to delay the process of finding a solution and not to advance it. The settled questions include:

- a) Zionism is a form of racism and racial discrimination. (And, therefore, the Zionist entity called "Israel" which is based on the precept of zionism is itself a racist ghetto).
- b) Palestinians, like any other people, are entitled to exercise their right to self-determination and they must be allowed to return to their homeland, free from the fear of persecution.
- c) Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) is the sole legitimate representative of the people of whole of Palestine.
- d) "Israel" will have to withdraw from all the territories occupied in the war of 1967.
- e) "Israel", in the mean time, must desist from changing the demographic character, geographical feature and cultural heritage of occupied lands.

If any U.S. President takes upon himself the task of finding a solution to the Arab-Zionist conflict, he can, if he is sincere at least to his own self, proceed from the above points determined by the collective wisdom of the kind of world organisation we have. Enough negotiations have taken place during the last 30 years. There is hardly any scope for further negotiations, either in Geneva or in Washington or elsewhere before the fulfillment of the prescribed obligations of the aggressors including their complete withdrawal from the occupied territories.

Without burning midnight oil fuels over Arabian oil takes the American "peace-makers" may profitably utilise their time by prevailing upon their recalcitrant Zionist clients to abide by the resolution of the last session of the General Assembly which called upon the Zionist aggressors to evacuate from territories occupied in the 1967 war by June 1, 1977. (Date has already expired).

As has been the case, the Zionists did not show any regard to the call of the UN General Assembly. Talks of all kinds and at all levels have failed to persuade the intransigent Zionists to respect the injunctions of authoritative world public opinion. In the circumstances the victims, the Arabs in general and the Palestinian Arabs in particular, have reasonably lost faith in the efficacy of protracted but fruitless negotiations. The only road left open to them is the road of national liberation struggle.

And, therefore, Carter's good-bad-indifferent statements and Vance's numerous visits to the Middle East have no direct relevance to the problems and prospects of peace in the area as far as the Arab liberation forces are concerned.



Eritrean liberation infantrymen advancing against Ethiopian forces

## Hunting South

People might wonder why some Africans kill some other Africans! But if those people are not bigots who still believe that "bad black people are too backward to know their own good", then they must conclude that not all Africans have good governments and democratic institutions. Hence they will eventually find out why the Ethiopians are off to exterminate their brothers in Eritrea. It is simply because the ruling military Junta in Ethiopia has had one or two deals with the CIA, promising the Ethiopians, and only promising, that they would really make a prosperous business out of colonizing Eritrea. If we just suppose that Ethiopia is deeply involved with the Americans in this type of scheming it may become easier to get a clear picture of the whole situation: Ethiopia is trying to swallow up Eritrea and the Imperialists will swallow up both!

However, it is curious to consider why the "Israelis" have obtruded themselves upon this affair. One might wonder why they cost themselves all that money and effort in training Ethiopian naval units and sending rocket-propelled boats so far and wide at a time when they allege, they are busy 'defending' themselves against the Arabs. Surely 'Israel' is not yet a self-dependent imperialist power that goes in for siding with some small Third World countries ruled by cliques. Nor is it for that matter acting on some benevolence, certainly not. It might be argued then, that 'Israel', being an imperialist base in this part of the world, is joining hands with those who have mounted "operation extermination" of the Eritreans. In fact, this is quite the case.

But 'Israel' will not be content unless it makes it its own way, South Africa might be a different story of racist cooperation between two originally

identical entities, whereas with Ethiopia, no doubt, the Zionists are preparing for a 'big hunt'. There is no denying of the fact that what is good for 'Israel' is also good for the US and vice versa, although 'Israel' is still autonomous in being able to act freely if necessary, with or without the consent of the Americans solely by virtue of the huge power wielded by the Zionists in the US itself. Hence the "little" aggressors can occasionally step out on their master's will and conduct their course of action as seen more fit by them, "the chosen", and not by the Americans who are, after all, gentlemen.

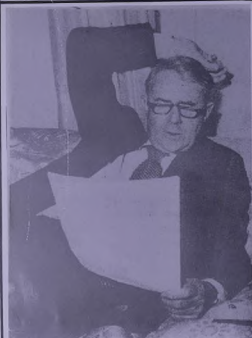
An equally important fact why 'Israel' is blessing the Ethiopian aggression against Eritrea is that the latter is an Arab territory. Without trying to accuse 'Israel' that she is here because of the Arabs and Arabs alone, as some might think (though no one can deny it), it is more appropriate to think of it in terms of strategy. Bab el-Mandeb, the southern passage to the Red Sea, is known to have been for so long a coveted area of the 'Israelis'. In addition, the Red Sea itself splits the Arab nation into two halves. More important still is the "scissors position" 'Israel' will be able to maintain in the south of Sudan, Egypt, and West of Saudi Arabia by setting up extensive and far-reaching military installations. So, in case of a sudden attack initiated by the 'Israelis', instead of occupied Palestine as a sole base for aggression, there would also be Ethiopia and Eritrea. It is obvious as well what a useful lake the Red Sea could turn into, and only for the usual 'Israeli' sport: War and expansion.

M.M.



Ethiopian military forces on the alert





Cyrus Vance: some suggestions of our own

## Playing with Time or Fire ?

US Secretary of State Cyrus Vance recently completed his nearly 2-week second tour of the Middle East, which took him to 5 Arab countries in addition to Tel Aviv. Prior to his departure from Washington, Mr. Vance told reporters that he was conveying "some suggestions of our own" to settle the Arab-Zionist conflict but refused to give details, because "it would be inappropriate and not constructive". However, he was pessimistic about the re-convening of the Geneva Conference next October, because "a number of difficult questions remain", adding that "it might be that we will have to wait until the UN General Assembly meets in September to settle them". The future of the Palestinians and the occupied Arab territories are two of the most important issues to be settled, he declared.

Since the fate of the Palestinians and the usurped Arab lands is at the heart of the Arab-Zionist conflict, Mr. Vance's statements clearly show that American efforts for resolving the conflict are treading a blind alley. We knew this fact right from the beginning and kept warning against reliance on imperialist designed solutions. It is now for those who worshipped the notion that salvation lies with the US to find some justification for their defeatist attitude.

We must bear in mind that American efforts in the search for a peaceful settlement in the Arab area are dedicated to serve American interests — not the cause of peace, be it regional or international. Secondly, they have always been marked by procrastination. And it appears that the U.S., in collusion with Arab reaction, has partially succeeded in utilizing every gained moment to realize such immediate goals: to destroy the Palestinian resistance as it is happening in Lebanon; to undermine Arab military force; to inflame fratricide; and to arm "Israel" to the teeth. The ultimate aim is to impose, by both soft and tough means, a humiliating settlement with a view to converting the oil-rich strategic Arab area into a neo-colony dominated by US imperialism.

That America is capitalizing on time can be seen from President Carter's unpredictable attitudes towards the conflict. As political observers have already noted he has gone in all directions in the Middle East. He spoke of "major Israeli" withdrawals from occupied Arab territories. Then he

stood for only "minor" adjustments to the borders existing before the June 67 War, insisting that the enemy should have two borders: recognized "secure borders" and "defensible lines". The envisaged defensible lines extend behind the sovereign Arab borders and include internationalized and demilitarized zones containing oil-posts (manned by Zionist forces) and electronic monitoring stations. This plan drives a wedge in the heart of the Arab homeland through recognized Zionist expansion reinforced by US military presence. Mr. Carter spoke openly of a Palestinian homeland; then he denied he had said anything encouraging the idea of an independent Palestinian state.

All indications show that Mr. Carter has now adopted the Begin Plan; he actually approved new arms deliveries to "Israel".

Of the total funds, recently approved by President Carter, for foreign military aid amounting to 3,200 million dollars, "Israel" alone will receive 1,785 million dollars.

What is this plan and how did Begin respond to the coming weapons? The infamous terrorist, Menachem Begin, speaks of the usurped Arab terri-

tories as "liberated Israeli lands and not occupied Arab lands." The broadlines of this plan are: non-recognition of the Palestinian resistance; no withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza; partial withdrawal from Sinai and minor withdrawal from the Golan Heights; and the replacement of the Geneva Conference by bilateral talks. And just upon his return from Washington a short while ago, Begin legalized "Israeli" settlements on the West Bank giving the green signal to a full plan of entrenchment in Arab lands.

To sum up: US efforts, which took official shape in 1969 (Rogers Plan) bore no fruit; and the US-Israeli concept of a settlement is definitely not accepted by the Arab masses. So what is new in Vance's diplomatic bag?

The man was courageous enough to say that no progress has been achieved. We agree, adding that nothing in the horizon shows that the defeatist settlement road followed by certain Arab regimes will ever lead to the full restoration of the Arab legitimate rights.

However, it is apparent that Mr. Vance will try to press the surrenderist regimes for more con-

cessions. The more pressures are exerted on surrenderist and reactionary Arab rulers, the more concessions they will yield. This is the premise from which the US-Zionist unholy alliance proceeds. Needless to say that it discards the Arab masses, thereby constituting a futile and dangerous approach. The Arab people offered immense sacrifices for the liberation of their usurped territories; and they are prepared to offer more blood and sweat. And they are capable of tearing any humiliating settlement accepted by rulers seeking accommodation with the enemy at the expense of Arab rights and dignity. These facts have been recognized by fair-minded people the world over; and international support for the Arab rights is wide enough and growing. Meanwhile the racist aggressive and expansionist nature of Zionism has been greatly exposed. The historic United Nations resolution of 1975 condemning Zionism stands witness here.

Mr. Vance's tour is another round in the hazardous game of playing with time, rather playing with fire.

A. B.

## Iraq's Oil Tanker Fleet is an Example of Self-reliance

The first Iraqi oil tanker started on its maiden voyage on a bright day nearly five years ago. It was loaded with the first shipment of nationally exploited crude.

This signalled the completion of an improbable defence line setting the stage for the nationalization of the Iraqi Petroleum Company which controlled most of the country's oil wealth and blocked the attainment of the country's eventual economic liberation. Iraq now has a steadily growing fleet of tankers capable of transporting a substantial amount of the country's oil exports.

Oil transportation is a vital factor in the oil industry. Its importance may be appreciated when we realize that in certain cases, it accounts for over 60% of oil price at the port of destination. And this figure is liable to rise under special circumstances such as war or the increase of freight charges.

To tighten their grip on the oil industry of Iraq, monopolistic oil concerns fully controlled all oil operations: prospecting, production, export, marketing, transport etc. But this picture is now a relic of the past.

The plan for bringing all the process from exploration to marketing under national control has now materialized. In 1970 the

Revolutionary Government, led by the Arab Baath Socialist Party, ordered seven tankers from Spain to create the nucleus of an Iraqi fleet of tankers. Each ship, whose capacity is 350,000 tons cost 11 million dollars.

With the Iraqi flag fluttering under gentle winds, the first tanker, Al-Rumaila, smoothly sailed from the Arabian Gulf on April 9, 1972, inaugurating a new era in Iraqi oil industry. The other 6 tankers arrived between 1972 and 1973. Like Rumaila, they were named after rich Iraqi oil fields: Khanagin, Janbour, Gurgur and Bazirgan, for example.

Shortly after the departure of the first oil tanker, the Iraqi Oil Tankers Company (IOTC) was established, as an affiliate of the Iraqi National Oil Company (INOC) with a capital of IO 50

Rumaila oil tanker



Ala Zahab oil tanker



million rising immediately to ID. 140 million. The (IOTC) is entrusted with all marine transport of crude, including loading, discharge, shipping, insurance, clearing and commission.

During the crucial times when monopolistic concerns conspired to prevent foreign tankers from carrying Iraqi oil in retaliation for the historic nationalization measures, Iraqi tankers and two others chartered from a friendly country managed to carry the nationally exploited crude. Total exports from June 1972 to the end of that year amounted to 631,000 tons. That was a record figure, proving the ability of the national staff who worked untrusting to foil monopolistic machinations.

Faring all the seas, the Iraqi tanker fleet is now well established in the oil market. The fleet also carries oil of other countries, like Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Iran.

Despite the heavy tasks, the (IOTC) could, in a relatively short period, achieve remarkable suc-

cess and gain international reputation as a sound and reliable oil carrier. It now maintains strong ties with business firms, transport agents and oil tanker builders.

New plans have been drawn up to expand the sphere of IOTC operations. They include the introduction of large crude carriers following the completion of Al-Bakr deep water terminal. Located in the Arabian Gulf, the terminal has been built according to the most up-to-date international specification to receive huge oil carriers of 350,000 tonnage. 8 such carriers have been ordered from Japan and Sweden.

The IOTC is already running 4 Japanese built tankers: Tariq Bin Ziad (145,000 tons), al-Yarmouk (145,000), al-Mutanabbih (144,000 tons) and Salahiddin (118,000 tons). It also took delivery of al-Qadissiyah (155,000), Amouriyah (155,000) and a third Swedish-built tanker al-Farahidi (145,100) tons.

The total number of the fleet would be 15 tankers with a capacity of 1,300,000 tons by the end of this year.

Studies are now being conducted for transportation of natural gas and some other commodities, such as iron.

The Iraqization of all hands on tankers is underway. IOTC has sent engineers and technicians for studies abroad. 50 graduates of the Marine Technical School are now under training. 200 students have been sent last year for studies and training in various foreign marine institutes. In addition, many Iraqis are now on practical training aboard the tankers.

Up to 1980, the IOTC will require a minimum number of 420 Iraqi technicians (masters, maritime officers, marine engineers, electricians, wireless officers and ship engineers).

On the pan-Arab level, Iraq together with 8 other oil-producing Arab countries has founded the Arab Oil Maritime Transport Company. Iraq has also contributed to the establishment of the Arab Shipyard and Repairs Company in Bahrain, the Arab Academy of Marine Transport in Alexandria and to studies on the creation of 3 Arab Maritime Academies in Basrah, Jeddah and Dubai.

Perhaps it is relevant to maintain that Iraq has built strategic oil pipe lines ensuring the flow of its oil to Arabian Gulf and Mediterranean ports.

Humbly we conclude by stating the fact that Iraq has set an example by having an oil industry that is exclusively and totally national.

## The Zionist Strategy of Aggression and the Myth of Secure Borders

When we learn that on the eve of June 5, 1967, Levi Eshkol hastened to put General Moshe Dayan at the head of the "Israeli" Defence Ministry, one of Ben Gurion's speeches instantly comes to mind. In 1964, you will recall, Ben Gurion had wished that Dayan had been the Chief of Staff and Commander-in-Chief of the Zionist forces in 1948; the frontiers of the "State of Israel", he thought, would undoubtedly have been wider than they were. Three years later, his wishes were fulfilled. Moshe Dayan distinguished himself as the leader of the "Israeli" military expedition which waged aggression on the pretext of a "preventive war", and came out victorious in the June 1967 war.

In the summer of 1965, the "Israeli" Foreign Minister, Abba Eban, was to utter prophetic statements in his article "Reality and Vision in the Middle East: An Israeli View". Many people failed to realize the significance of the opinion he then expressed:

"It is not absurd to imagine Arab leaders urgently urging a return to the frontier of 1966 or 1967, just as they now urge a return to the frontier of 1947 which they once set aside by force."

He considered that the future still depended on the "Israeli" expansionist will and that it was not unlikely that the story whose events succeeded themselves since 1948, should repeat itself. What particularly draws our attention in this article, is Abba Eban's mentioning what he calls "a constant appeal to the Middle Eastern map". In his opinion, wars are "highly ineffective" in bringing about desired changes in the political map of an area, and "the idea that any conceivable war in the Middle East would substantially change the political or territorial structure deserves a more critical scrutiny by Arab minds". He then proceeded to enumerate the factors which he felt represented obstacles to the realization of territorial gains by waging a new war:

1. Local military deterrence.
2. International respect for the existing frontier structure.
3. World opinion which makes the cry for "Israel's liquidation discordant".

Yet, it is primarily the "Israeli" will for expansion which transformed the Foreign Minister's vision into reality, when "Israel" carried out its aggression on the morning of June 5, 1967. Nearly two years after Abba Eban declared his decision to stick to the status quo in the Middle East to

seek to preserve it, this Foreign Minister issued the following statement to the information agencies and the press on June 16, 1967:

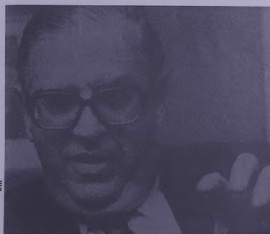
"Should the United Nations vote it with 121 votes against one, we will not withdraw from the territories we occupy."

### OPEN STRATEGY OF AGGRESSION

Soon after, General Moshe Dayan expressed frankly and clearly the "Israeli" expansionist intentions and gave free rein to the official position of the government with respect to what could be designated as "the open strategy of expansion". Early in August, the Knesset members met to vote on a motion regarding "Israel's" policy vis-a-vis the occupied territories. The motion was passed by an



Moshe Dayan: aggression under the pretext of "preventive war"



Abba Eban: the future depends on "Israel's" expansionist will



overwhelming majority of the House — the coalition and Agudat Yisrael. Only the two communist actions voted against, whereas the Free Centre, Uri Avneri, abstained from voting. The operative part of the motion reads as follows:

"The Knesset approves the stand of the Government in favour of steps leading to direct talks between 'Israel' and the Arab countries on the signing of peace agreements, and reaffirms that so long as peace is not attained 'Israel' will continue to maintain unaltered the situation created by the cease-fire arrangements following the 'Israel's' Defence Forces' successful repulsion of enemy aggression."

The next part of the resolution said that "the Knesset expected the Jewish people... to carry out the supreme national injunction of 'aliya' to 'Israel.'"

Since then, "Israeli" military leaders and politicians began issuing one statement after another to express their intentions with respect to the territories occupied by the "Defence" Army. At a symposium of the Habonim youth movement on the problems of attracting immigration of Jewish youth, Mr. Levi Eshkol declared that the occupied territories must "help us to ensure that in the future we shall not again have the kind of borders that invite attack by our neighbours."

Voices were raised in "Israeli" circles from the military to officials and the majority of the population, and from organisations to parties and religious associations — to reiterate in chorus: "No return to the frontiers of 1948." In the beginning, this chorus was led by Moshe Dayan and Yigal Alon in the midst of the enthusiasm of the revisionist and the religious groups and to the embarrassment of the "Israeli left" which was on the verge of turning to the right. And Moshe Dayan began issuing arrogant statements such as the following with the enthusiastic approval of the overwhelming majority of the population:

"We need to consider the reality of 1967 and the map of 1948. We need not only permanent borders, but borders that will ensure peace."

"Peace does not depend on Arab wishes alone, but on the kind of borders 'Israel' has."

"The solution to the Arab refugee problem does not lie in 'Israel's' hands alone, but must be tackled on a regional basis."

He, then opposed:

"Facile theories that supposed the entire solution lay within our means. There is not room for a million Arab refugees within 'Israel'. The solution does not lie in our restricted area and with us alone, but in the region as a whole."

Then he said:

"We are in Jerusalem and the West Bank because our security demands it. We are not colonialists and this is not Aden: we have our own

shopkeepers and our own inhabitants to run things. They (the Arabs) should know their opposition will decide nothing. If they do not, we cooperate, well and good, but if they do not, we manage without them."

What, in Dayan's statements — which soon became threats — demands our attention is the persistent emphasis on the question of frontiers needed by the "Israeli State" twenty years after the partition plan and the creation of the state in the land of Palestine. What are these frontiers which the Zionists seek to obtain through their aggression aimed at consecrating the reality of 1967, and how does Zionism wish to draw up its expansionist map twenty years after the establishment of the state?

#### MULTI-BOUNDARY CONCEPT

Moshe Dayan resorted to making a distinction between "permanent borders" and "borders that will ensure peace." He also confirmed that peace in the area also depends on "the kind of borders Israel has". He was not the only one in "Israel" to stress the difference between the "armistice lines and the cease-fire lines" on the one hand, and the "natural", "secure", and "historic" frontiers on the other. It would suffice for us to remember, in this connection, "Israel's" concept of the territories it intended to occupy by force as "the occupied portions of the Jewish National Home," or the "complementary parts of the historic land of 'Israel'", then their counting them among the territories whose liberation had not yet been completed. As soon as the aggression was completed and the occupation was consolidated, reference was made to the "liberated territories" while voices were raised to demand natural frontiers which would secure peace and meet economic needs which coincided with Zionism's picture derived from

the distortion of historical facts under the cover of "God's promise" and the "Holy Boundaries".

The student of the nature of "Israeli" strategy and its peculiar logic with respect to the question of desired frontiers, will find an outstanding similarity between the Zionist movement's demands and the ambitions of the "Israeli" state since their early stages. Official Zionism proceeded along the lines of the slogan "the legal frontiers" or the frontiers of the Homeland "guaranteed by international law" — as it occurred in the Basle Programme nearly seventy years ago. According to Zionist allegations, the Balfour Declaration was to guarantee in 1917, the "legal borders", although controversial views were held later on by both kinds of "political Zionists", the "Practicalists" and the "Revisionists", about the size of the area which these legal borders should include. When the Partition Plan was adopted, Zionism accepted it "reluctantly". Yes, it chose not to respect the frontiers of the plan but occupied more of the Arab territories, giving as a pretext Arab rejection of the Partition plan at times, while at others claiming that the Arabs had violated it by attacking the "Israeli" state in 1948. When the armistice agreements were signed, the "Israeli" officials began speaking of the "boundaries of the State" which were established on a portion of the "Promised Land of Israel", or of the "Frontiers of the Nation" which should coincide with the sacred historical frontiers.

#### FLUCTUATING STRATEGY

Thus, "Israeli" strategy fluctuated deliberately between the slogan of "legal frontiers" (which apparently differ from those of the cease-fire lines and the armistice), and "secure frontiers" which will ensure safety and stability while protecting Zionist schemes which are based on expansionist

possibilities and the realization of the vital space necessary for increasing Jewish colonization. Then came the June aggression — after the failure of the tripartite aggression of 1956 — which was to offer "Israeli" militarism the opportunity to fulfill its expansionist plans, the first phase having been "the transfer of the battlefield into the enemy's territory" (Eshkol 1965). As a result, the future of the occupied territories was dealt with. Voices were raised to demand "permanent and secure" frontiers while the "Israeli" authorities were setting up military colonies (kibbutz) in strategic areas of the West Bank (between Hebron and Bethlehem and on the coast of the Dead Sea), in the Golan Heights and the Syrian area of Banias, or in the Egyptian area of El-Arish and the Gaza Strip. These kibbutzim were all set up in accordance with the overt expansionist strategy which "Israel" has chosen to follow.

Yet, the new slogan which was raised high by "Israel" during the period succeeding the last aggression suddenly transformed into a slogan demanding "the Holy Boundaries." In reality, Zionist expansionist schemes keep using the three mentioned slogans one after the other on some occasions, while on others it amalgamates all three together. One should further note that the "Israeli" expansionist chorus includes the voices of the Revisionists, the religious group, the Poale Zion and the parties of the centre. Besides, the statement made by the Great Rabbi which was considered as a religious "decree" cannot be separated from its political meaning on both external and internal levels. This decree causes a great deal of soul-searching for any Jew who is willing to relinquish an inch of the occupied territories. Why? Because the slogan "The Holy Boundaries" which coincides now with two other political slogans

A Zionist practice of racial discrimination against the Arabs



Migrating Zionists in search in the occupied Arab territories



considered all the occupied territories as falling within the land of Gilead. Thus, the Great Rabbi's decree becomes: "No Jew has the right to turn over one iota of these territories unless he is an infidel (unbeliever)." At the same time, Ben Gurion raised his voice to demand recognition by the world at large of the right of military conquest which in turn will give the authority to settle Jews in the occupied territories ("the liberated" territories, according to him).

In the midst of expansionist attempts to outbid each other, Levi Eshkol finally raised his voice. The "Israeli" Prime Minister spoke for the first time on October 28, 1967, about what he called "Greater Israel" which would include the occupied territories of the Egyptian Arab Republic, Jordan and Syria. He made this declaration in his opening speech to the B'Nai B'Rith Israeli Commission in the context of a new call for Jewish settlers from abroad. As to this sudden turn in Eshkol's statements, it was mentioned in the Herald Tribune in the following manner:

"Although Mr. Eshkol and other "Israeli" leaders have suggested before that parts of the occupied areas be settled by Jews to influence eventual border discussions, his reference to a "greater Israel" seemed to be the most direct suggestion so far."

Eshkol went on to speak about "new opportunities" which "faced the nation in the aftermath of its victory" and, asked himself the following question:

"If you were to ask me what is required to realize these opportunities, I would answer in one simple word: we need Jews."

"In greater Israel today we have a population of 3.8 million souls. Of these, 2.4 million are Jews; 1.4 million are non-Jews. The percentage of Jews in the total population is 64 per cent; the non-Jews are 36 per cent."

"Whatever the political decisions that will eventually be made, they must not be determined by a situation in which there is no 'aliya' (immigration into Israel) or prospect of 'aliya.'"

The newspaper correspondent indicated that "Israeli" leaders had long "expressed concern over the falling birth rate among Jews in "Israel" and the steep drop in immigration." Early in May 1968, the American Time magazine indicated, in an article written on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the establishment of the "State of Israel", that "many of the country's leaders are also troubled about a decline in immigration. Though several hundred people of the thousands who came to help during the war decided to live in "Israel", the country is now losing many trained citizens who are emigrating to the west."

In this article, reference was made to the serious weaknesses the economy was suffering from, among which are:

"1. Its dependence upon the generosity of the Jews abroad; and

2. Its large trade deficit."

This brought Eshkol's appeal and address to the American audience in "Israel" to the level of events and to that of the expansion of "Israeli" territory and the creation of what he named "Greater Israel". In "Israeli" planning, the call for more Jewish immigration means bringing more people in need of land and settling them in the occupied Arab territories. As to the pretext which Eshkol used to win over the support of his American audience, it consisted of an allegation that settling Jews in these areas would consolidate the position of "Israel" and better its opportunity to meet the Arabs with equal strength. It is obvious that Eshkol's open reference to "Greater Israel" and to the "Jewish" and "non-Jewish" inhabitants (without mentioning the Arabs) as well as the expansion of his worry about the decline of immigration was very close to the thinking of "Israeli" planners (and quite in conformity with their aspirations).

#### NEW FRONTIERS

On the day following the speech in which he had proclaimed the "Greater Israel" plan Eshkol uttered another statement, the essence of which was that "Israel" was seeking to consolidate its roots in the "new frontiers" and that it intended to keep most of the Arab territories it occupied. This declaration came as a major policy statement before the Knesset. He indicated, among other things, that he did not regard some of the areas "Israel" had won as rightfully belonging to Jordan or Egypt (namely the West Bank and Gaza) since these had been acquired by military provocation and aggression on the part of the Arab states. He further argued that although the armistice agreement had reorganized such an occupation, they were nullified by the previously mentioned provocation and aggression.

He forgot, however, or pretended to forget to mention how "Israel" had occupied areas outside the scope of the frontiers of the partition of Palestine, if not the whole of Palestine. It is clear that the Zionist expansionist plans succeeded in their search for justifications and allegations to allow the realization of their schemes. Speaking of the frontiers, Eshkol said:

"It was agreed, in 1949 that the armistice lines were dictated by military considerations only and that they were not frontiers."

Thus, he reached his aim by proclaiming "Israel's" refusal to withdraw to the prewar lines, justifying the "Israeli" position by invoking legality, policy, security and peace, and declaring that his government's policy was based on "the establishment of secure national frontiers agreed upon in the framework of a peace conference." It is to be noted that he changed the name of the "Gulf of Akaba" to the "Gulf of Eilat."

He finally exposed his Zionist scheme aiming at the establishment of peace according to the following points:

**First** — "Israel's" capabilities for deterrence and defence.

**Second** — Non-interference by the states in the area on the side of those who proclaimed their will to destroy "Israel".

**Third** — Avoidance by the United Nations of issuing vague statements which, in terms of a peace settlement, would be meaningless.

In this way the call to "Greater Israel" reached the official Zionist level after the strategy of expansion had put it at the level of action and execution. On the eve of the anniversary of Balfour's Declaration, Eshkol indicated that the number of Jews in "Israel" would double between 1967 and 2000 and exceed five million by the end of the century, while on the other hand, Lord Victor Rothschild (the nephew of the Rothschild who received the letter containing the Balfour Declaration) called for the Big Powers to issue a new Balfour Declaration. As to the former "Chief of Staff of Israel", Yitzhak Rabin, he joined the expansionist chorus when he declared in New York — in December, 1967:

"Israel would make a big mistake if it gives up the territorial acquisitions of the June war."

"In this war, we have reached ideal military lines which can be considered at present our most important achievement."

He then gave as a condition "a change in the political relationships" between "Israel" and the Arab states, and the attainment of a "mutual agreement" in the "peace talks" stating:

"Then, we would withdraw to more restricted lines than the actual frontiers."

#### EXPANSIONISM AND PEACE MASK

The basic condition for the abandonment by "Israel" of certain gains or its "withdrawal to lines more restricted than the actual frontiers" (it is clear that a complete withdrawal is not considered that "Israeli" expansionist plans since perhaps this would have been, in Rabin's opinion, a big mistake) is nothing but the Arab state's recognition of "Israel". Here we see an important aspect

of the "Israeli" scheme which seeks to conceal the aggressive expansionist aims behind the idea of "desire for peace". And the peace which "Israel" refers to does not differ a great deal from the acceptance of the actual situation and giving in to "Israeli" demands under the cover of "secure frontiers".

On the other hand, we see the "Israeli" Prime Minister standing before six thousand university students in New York in January, 1968 reiterating his appeal to the Jewish youth to come to "Israel" and help it fulfil its aspirations. At the same time, he pointed out the necessity of preserving the "Israeli" military force as a condition for the establishment of peace in the Middle East. The five principles which he enumerated in his "expose" on the policy of "Israel" were the following:

**First** — Search for peace between "Israel" and the neighbouring Arab states.

**Second** — Peace will be established through direct negotiations which would lead to official peace agreements between "Israel" and the neighbouring states.

**Third** — Free passage for "Israeli" ships through the Suez Canal and the Tiran Straits form an integral part of any agreement.

**Fourth** — Peace agreements will be based on secure frontiers agreed upon by "Israel" and the neighbouring Arab states.

**Fifth** — Establishment of peace in the Middle East and regional cooperation which will follow open possibilities for the solution of the refugee problem within the framework of a regional and international agreement.

Commenting on Eshkol's proclamation of the plan aiming at establishing "Great Israel", a journalist wrote: "Perhaps in speaking about 'Greater Israel' from the Suez Canal to the Qunaitra and the Jordan River, Eshkol overlooked the fact that the Arabs would have the right to speak about 'Greater Palestine' also from the Suez Canal to the Qunaitra and the Jordan River."

The wider "Israel" becomes by including non-Palestinian land, the greater the Palestine question becomes until it becomes the problem of the Egyptian country, the Syrian country, the Jordanian country, and thus the Arab country."

Certainly, the call to "Greater Israel" is a great challenge to all of the Arab states and the answer to a great challenge is great confrontation. Let us remember Lord Curzon's statement in his book, Boundaries, in which he expressed his conviction that "the frontiers are like Moses' sword; they form the basis of the outbreak of the war or the establishment of peace, that of the life of the peoples or their extinction."





Carter and Begin: America's special relationship with "Israel"

## Begin, Zionism and Expansion

● 29 YEARS HAVE PASSED SINCE THE OCCUPATION OF MOST OF PALESTINE

● BEGIN SAYS THE WEST BANK IS A LIBERATED TERRITORY, NOT OCCUPIED

The Zionist ideology was built on the concept of occupying the Palestinian land and establishing on it the so-called "Jewish state"; and consequently liquidating and getting rid of the Palestinian people. All Zionist parties in "Israel" believe in this concept or else they would not be called Zionist.

Since 1948, till the recent May 17 "Israeli" elections, the Zionist Labour Party controlled state power and led three expansionist wars against the Palestinians and Arabs in 1948, 1956, and 1967. There were also numerous violations of the cease-fires and many atrocities against the Palestinian people — from confiscating their land to killing them to torturing them severely in the Zionist prisons to driving most of them outside of their homeland.

The new elections brought Menahem Begin of the "Likud" to power. The Zionist settlers in Palestine choose the terrorist Begin to represent them, not because the Labor party is not Zionist anymore, but because they don't believe in its political manoeuvring which "might lead them" to some concessions on their "historic rights" in Palestine. They believe that the Zionist state existed and maintained this existence through war, and power superiority, and the leadership of Begin and his bloc are the only candidates capable at this period to maintain this image.

There are not strategic differences between all the Zionist parties in occupied Palestine; the only differences are tactical and these include economic, military, religious and political differences. However, these differences did not stop Begin after the elections from calling on June 7 for a "national unity government" with the Labor Party and he "noted that Labor and Likud agree on refusing to negotiate with the Palestinian Liberation Organization, on objecting to the establishment of a Palestinian state on the occupied West Bank of the Jordan River, and on refusing to withdraw to borders that existed before the 1967 Arab-Israeli war." (Van. Sun, June 7, 1977) So what are the political differences between "Labor" and "Likud"? Two minor differences were put forward in the debate between Peres and Begin before the May 17 elections. The first is towards the withdrawal from some territory captured in the 1967 war, and the second is on the relation

with the U.S. The Labor position on the first point is to exchange "some" territory captured in the 1967 war including the West Bank of the Jordan River, for a "peace settlement", while the Likud position is to retain all the West Bank. This difference is minor because when the Labor party was in power, 43 Zionist settlements were established all across the West Bank (their names, positions and nature have been documented in the Palestine Affairs magazine, Issue No. 67, June 1977). The majority of these settlements were legal in the eyes of the Labor government and they did not try to stop the rest of them. So if there would be a withdrawal it will be from "some" territory and this "some" doesn't include Jerusalem nor these settlements. Also, this withdrawal would take from 10 to 20 years, according to the "Israeli" timetable, reported by Time correspondent Donald Neff on Dec. 12, 1976.

The Labor party position, on the long run, is the same as the Likud bloc. They only think they need more time to establish a fait accompli and then to declare more of the occupied territories as part of "Israel".

Regarding the relation with the U.S., Begin emphasized this relation and he said "Israel" must protect its ties with the U.S., its only supplier of military and economic aid. He also stated he would "deepen" the friendship and understanding with America, but he said that "Israel" "must not be afraid to say no" on such issues as peace terms and that the Labor party is failing to explain adequately Israel's position on terms to the United States. (AP, Van. Sun, May 16, 1977).

This difference is a tactical one and interrelated with the first difference. The alliance between the U.S. and "Israel" is a strategic one and was built to protect both of their interests in the area. In a news conference on May 12, Carter "took pains to reassure them (the "Israelis" - ed.), stressing his country's 'special relationship' with Israel." (Van. Sun., May 14, 1977). After the Zionist election, on May 25, "Carter says he has told Prince Fahd of Saudi Arabia that the United States is deeply committed to the security and peaceful existence of Israel and that the Arabs 'understand this very well.'" (AP, Van. Sun., May 25, 1977) After Begin won the vote of confidence in the Knesset and on June 27, "U.S. State Secretary

Cyrus Vance offered the latest assurance to an American Jewish leader" that "the U.S. has no intention of imposing a settlement in the Middle East", and "promised support for 'full normalization of relations between the Arab states and Israel'." (AP, Van. Sun., June 28 1977).

This is the U.S. position on the Middle East. The talk about its contradiction with the new regime is created by the imagination of the Arab reactionaries who still think they can trust Carter and his administration. Fahd was quoted on June 29, that his talks with Carter "convinced me the U.S. president is seriously seeking a just settlement in the Middle East. I think Arab governments should all help President Carter. He is sincere and the current chance for reaching a peaceful solution may not occur again." But he added that if Carter's



Deported Palestinians

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## NEWS IN PICTURES



Dr. Zaid Haider, Member of the ABSP National Leadership and In-charge of the Foreign Relations Bureau, received on July 31, Mr. Ted Innes, the Australian M.P.



Dr. Qasim Sallam, member of the ABSP National Leadership, received on August 9, the Libyan Popular Congress delegation lead by Mr. Ibrahim al-Kharasi.



Mr. Hassan Ali, Minister of Trade, received on August 9, the Yugoslav Undersecretary of the Ministry of Trade and his accompanying delegation.



Mr. Aziz Rasheed, Minister of Transport, is seen signing on August 9, an agreement with the Jordanian Minister of Finance and Customs on leasing a free zone to Iraq at Aqaba Port.



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peace-making efforts fail, Saudi Arabia would not impose an oil embargo. He also warned Arab countries against waging a new Middle East war because they can't beat "Israel" on the battlefield, (from Al-Amal, the official newspaper of the Phalangist Party, AP, Van. Sun., June 29, 1977.) May we ask what the Arab reactionaries want to do? Obviously total surrender to the U.S. and Zionist enemies.

The outcome of the Zionist elections did not result in any basic changes in the positions of the Zionist state or the U.S. imperialists or the Arab reactionaries. What it did show, however, was the total bankruptcy of Zionist ideology. Despite all the Imperialist aid and concessions given by the Arab reactionaries, its destruction is inevitable and the victory of the Palestinian and Arab peoples is certain.

Courtesy: Voice of Arab World



Scene from the marshes

## Marshes of Southern Iraq

Iraq is renowned the world over for its historical and archaeological sites — places like Nineveh, Babylon, Hatra, Samarra have become unforgettable names. Iraq is one of the world's rarest countries which can boast of its diverse climatic and topographical conditions. Summer resorts of the northern area, surrounded by gigantic ice-capped mountains, beautified by cool springs and lofty trees, are flooded by people during hot season, while in the far south the great marshland is an ideal place to visit in winter.

### Fascinating Life

The marshes of the south are one of the most attractive and fascinating parts of the country. The great marshland where the legendary Tigris and Euphrates meet is known locally "al-Hor". The villages on this great swamp are made of a cluster of reed houses and the sole means of communication is a network of waterways, reminding one of the famous city of Venice when sailing in a boat in the waterlanes. Every house stands on its own little artificially formed island. The marshman's house is entirely constructed of reeds and reed

mats, void of any nails or any type of metal. The houses are usually made during the hot season when the water level is low. The foundation is laid of mud, reeds and reed mats, firmly trodden and reinforced by further layers until a firm platform is formed strong enough to support the house and an adjoining yard of cattle. All the houses and cottages are not of a uniform size: there are smaller and bigger houses and some magnificent structures, just like an ordinary city.

### Waterways for Roads

The lanes between the villages are waterways and the only way of visiting a neighbour or a distant friend or relative is by paddling over in a boat, or by swimming on a bundle of reeds for short distances. Each cottage has its own small herd of buffaloes, cows and chickens. The marshman depends on these animals for his food. The indefatigable marshwoman is the most hardworking of the folk's community. In addition to nursing the cattle, she looks after the whole family in every aspect of a housewife's work.

### Marshland in History

One of the oldest dwellers of the marshland called "Subba"

are the best craftsmen. They made river boats, ploughs, spades and fishing gear in addition to being skilful silversmiths and goldsmiths.

This great marshland must have existed since times immemorial. The spot in ancient times, known as "sealand" of Assyria was the playing and hunting ground for Sumerian, Babylonian and Assyrian kings. It was here that the great Assyrian king Gilgamesh came for attaining immortality.

The marshland has also been a trading centre of ancient Iraqs. The ancient marshman traded in grain, fish and reeds. Fish has always been the staple food of the marshman. Rice has been introduced in a later period.

### Revolution and Marshland

The marshland has undergone tremendous transformation since the July Revolution of 1968. In a short span of time, the region is booming with social and recreational projects, schools, dispensaries and health centres. The whole region is in the process of total transformation with the introduction of new techniques. New thoughts have also been injected into the minds of marsh people.

### Economic Assets

The marshes of southern Iraq are a source of national wealth. The reeds are a tremendous economic asset for the paper industry, and the large assortment of birds and fish a tourist attraction. A recent study by the Ministry of Irrigation states that the water level in 9000-square-kilometre-marshland is falling gradually. This fall started in 1974 and if it continues, the report says, the marshes will be a dry land in 20-25 years. In the light of this report, the Supreme Agricultural Council has ordered a detailed study, taking into account the social and economic consequences in relation to marshland dwellers.

## The "Israeli Begins"

Anyone can look better than an "Israeli" who is putting on an appearance of kindness; especially so when a particular "Israeli" is himself a record of all sorts of criminalities. Say, for example, as Mr. Menahem Begin is now struggling to appear. Mr. Begin, however, succeeds in assuming such a posture of kindness — and he has already started to since he took up premiership — there is no doubt that the man will be strange-looking.

More strange still is that the Begin history is known from one end of the world to the other, not least in the West. And for all that the Western propaganda machine has already started to churn anew fresh justifications, rephrasings, petitions and stories all pertaining to the end that no, not really... the man is just a "zealot"... a "nationalist" who loves his people exceptionally much! Some are out to describe him as "hawkish" (1), being opposed to the 'doves' (11), and to condemn his, oh! extremism. Others admit that the man is a mighty terrorist and even a fanatic, and mention one of the extermination tasks he led in the famous Deir Yassin village massacre. Yet all of them whether for, against or in between, agree on one major thing: that Mr. Begin is one of the "prominent heroes" who led "Israel's war of independence"! Well, if planting the illegal "Israel" into the heart of the Arab nation and perpetrating massacres against the peaceful Arabs could be called a "war of independence", then, why not also call Begin a "saint" or a "lamb"?!

Although Begin does not differ a jot from the previous eight Zionist premiers, it is still important to note that the so-called "hawks" are less sensitive than the others for scandals; a reason why perhaps

jargonizing in terms of doves and hawks can be pretty useful to the 'Israelis' sometimes; in addition, of course, to projecting an image of democracy. Rabin can easily declare the Kadum settlement in the West Bank, as illegal, but he would not move a finger to do an actual thing, though the 'Israelis' allege they removed the squatters. Similarly would any other 'dove' with a dash of progressiveness cry out loud against the Gush Emunim Hit Group, look worried, concerned, and even snar, but when it comes to action all he would do is to pretend that nothing could be done. You see, democracy! Begin, on the other hand, and indeed for the disadvantage of some Arabs, is bluntly straightforward: he declares to your face that "Israel will liberate all Arab lands", or to be more precise, "Israel" will go on killing Arabs and occupying lands to doomsday. Just dare and object. At the same time he would ask for a "true peace" settlement!

It is no secret that Mr. Begin is a potential killer. Yet for those who believe that the Begin "hard-liner" is just an exception or a label of a few similar people in 'Israel', they are indulging in a cruel self-deception. Yes, a so-called 'moderate' like Mr. Rabin could retain occupied Arab lands, prepare to occupy more, declare intentions for 'peace' and moreover, appear 'justified'. Yet no 'Israelis' whatsoever could sound convincing if he dares refute or justify the daily killing, torturing and expelling of thousands of Arabs. It is time everyone should realize that all the 'Israelis' are just variations on the Begin case.

The 'Israeli Begins' even turned the whole case from a blunt occupation into a question of 'struggling, for liberation, heroism, survival' and what have you.

# The Babylonian and Arab Contribution to Astrology and Astronomy

by Sheriff Yusuf

The belief in a connection between heavenly bodies (sun, moon and planets) and the life of human beings has played an important part in human history. For long ages astrology was identified, and the belief in it is found in a developed form among the ancient Sumerians and Babylonians, and directly or indirectly, through the Babylonians this belief spread to other nations.

The history of astrology can now be traced to the earliest phases of Babylon history 3000 B.C. in Babylonia as in Assyria astrology took its place in the official cult as one of the two chief means at the disposal of the priest for ascertaining the will and intention of the gods; the other being the inspection of the liver of the sacrificial animal.

Even at the present day astrology influences many minds. To such believers in astrology man's life and happiness are largely dependent upon phenomena in the heavens. In the early age of culture, it was a natural step for priests to perfect a theory of a complete accord between the phenomena observed in the heavens and the occurrences on the earth.

To the Babylonians moon and sun had divine powers, and same held good of the planets. Of the planets five were recognized: Jupiter, Venus, Saturn, Mercury and Mars. These five planets

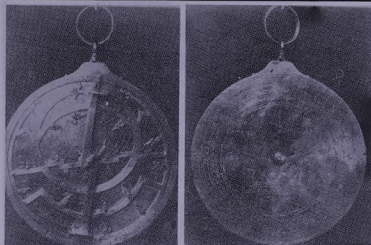
were identified with the great gods: Jupiter with Marduk, Venus with the goddess Ishtar, Saturn with Ninib, Mercury with Nebo and Mars with Nergal. The moon-god was called Sin and the sun-god Shamash. The movements of the sun, moon and the five planets were regarded as representing the activity of the gods in question.

If, therefore, one could correctly read and interpret the activity of these powers, one knew what the gods were going to bring about. The Babylonian priests accordingly addressed themselves to the task of perfecting a system of interpretation of the phenomena to be observed in the heavens. And it was natural that the system was extended from the moon, sun and the five planets to the more prominent and recognizable fixed stars.

The system involved not merely the movements of these planets, but also the observation of their relative position to one another and to all kinds of peculiarities noted at any point in the course of their movements. To all these phenomena some significance was attached, the most significant being the eclipse of the moon. In this way a mass of traditional interpretation of all kinds of observed phenomena was gathered, and these became a guide to the priest for all times.



Every statue from Assyria (height 164 cm.)



The two faces of an old astrotable found in an old mosque in Mosul (diameter 23.5 cm.)

The astronomical knowledge which accompanied early Babylonian astrology was essentially of empirical character. As early as in the days of Hammurabi (2000 B.C.) the combination of prominent groups of stars with outlines of pictures was fantastically put together. The theory of the ecliptic as representing the course of the sun through years, divided among 12 constellations with a measurement of 30 degrees to each division, is also of Babylonian origin. Similarly, the other accomplishments of Babylonian astronomers, such as their system of moon calculations and the drawing up of planetary tablets of moon belong to them.

The middle of the 4th century B.C. was definitely fixed as the period when Babylonian astrology began its triumphal march to the West, invading the domain of Greek and Roman culture and destined to exercise a strong hold on all nations, more particularly Egypt, that came within the sphere of Greek and Roman influence.

From Babylonians the Greeks derived their first notions of astronomy. They copied the Babylonian astrologers, appropriated Babylonian knowledge of the



The Ecliptic Gate of Babylon

planets and their courses, and learned to predict eclipses. This is a cycle of 18 years 11 days, of 223 lunations discovered at unknown epoch in Chaldea. Records dating from the reign of Sargon of Akkad (3800 B.C.) imply that even then the varying aspects of the sky had been long under expert observation.

The Babylonian computers were not only aware of the fact that Venus returns in almost exactly 8 years to a given starting point in the sky, but they were also able to establish similar periodic relations in 46, 59, 79 and 83 years respectively for Mercury, Saturn, Mars and Jupiter.

Subsequently, in the hands of the Greeks and Egyptians both astrology and astronomy were carried far beyond the limits attained by the Babylonians. The

combination of the two fields seems to grow more complete with each age until we reach the threshold of modern science.

## During Abbasid Period

The Arabs, during the Abbasid period, not only assimilated the classical heritage of Greece and the ancient lore of India and Persia, but also adapted both to their own need and ways of thinking. In astrology Abu-Mas'har, who lived and worked in Baghdad, was the most distinguished figure. Apart from his belief in astral influence as the cause of birth, events of life and death of everything, he communicated to the West the law of cycles, which in a treatise he explained on the basis of the relations to moon's rising and setting.

The scientific study of astronomy was begun under the influence of an Indian work, the *Sindhind* (*Siddhanta*), brought to Baghdad in the year 771. The Greek influence ranked first in importance. An early translation of Ptolemy's *Almagest* was carried by several astronomers. In connection with his school, the Bayt-al-Hikmah, Caliph al-Mamun erected at Baghdad an astronomical observatory. Here the Caliph's astronomers not only made systematic observation of the celestial movements, but also arrived at remarkably precise results.

Al-Mamun's astronomers performed one of the most delicate geodetic operations — the measuring of the length of a terrestrial degree. The object was to determine the size of the earth and its circumference on the assumption that the earth was round.



The cosmic dimension of Islamic rites, especially the daily prayers, brought into focus the importance of astronomy for the religious community. The time of the daily prayers had to be determined throughout the year for every geographical latitude and longitude where there were faithful Moslems, and the direction for the prayers facing Mecca had to be determined again for every locality where the prayers were performed.

Astronomy in its traditional Islamic setting is concerned with observation of the fixed stars and planets, calculation of planetary motion and construction and use of astronomical instruments.

Muslim astronomers were responsible for creating the most exact and perfect solar calendar. They devised more popular calendars used by farmers and served as models for Western farmers Almanac (from the Arabic al-Manakh — climate).

The love for astronomy caused Arab architects to decorate buildings with them, the earliest example being Qusayr Amrah Umayyad palace, in the Syrian Desert, where the constellations were represented. Mosques also have almost always been embellished with sundials of various degrees of perfection, accuracy and beauty.

The Arabs, moreover, perfected the astrolabe which was used for astronomy as well as mathematics and physics. Certain astronomers had also made mechanical astrolabes by which the positions of planets and stars were determined with the help of a gear mechanism.

The instrument spread later into Europe and was the forerunner of the mechanical clock. A comparative study reveals the strong influence of Islamic instruments upon those used by European astronomers. The astrolabe was introduced into Europe by the Arabs as early as A.D. 700. Marine's astrolabe was the instrument used by Columbus. With the tables of sun's declination he could calculate his latitude by meridian altitudes of the sun taken with astrolabe.

As far as Arab civilization is

concerned, the achievement of astronomy was to provide at one extreme for the practical needs of the community by devising calendars, almanacs, treatise to find the direction of Mecca and the like, and at the other extreme a mathematical astronomy of remarkable accuracy. It provided a science which influenced the West profoundly.

Thus was the contribution of Mesopotamia's people in the field of astrology and astronomy from the dawn of history to the golden age of the Abbasid period.



The first zodiac painted by the Arabs inside the dome of an Umayyad desert palace

## MUSIC

### Music and Ballet School Attains Maturity

Hundreds of spectators recently enjoyed the interesting shows staged for three consecutive nights by the Baghdad School of Music and Ballet.

A cultural-artistic creation of July 17 Revolution, the institution is well looked after by the Ministry of Information with the aim of schooling talented artists and turning them into highly qualified musicians and ballet dancers. The first batch of graduates of the school were sent abroad in 1976 for higher studies. Other batches will follow suit during this and the coming years.

A special branch for oriental music has been opened in the school to cover the lute. It is planned to expand this department in the next few years to constitute a foundation for the promotion of our contemporary music and for the revival of our original Arab musical heritage.

The shows presented by the school proved a high degree of ability for coordination and harmony. In the domain of songs, the students succeeded in presenting the originality of our music in a distinct modern sense. They also succeeded in presenting Bach's "Contemplation", Mozart's "The Marriage of Figaro", Tchaikovsky's "Nuts Cracker", Chashaturian's "Swords Dance". In addition they played works of musicians also of international fame.

A one-act four scene Iraqi Ballet entitled "The Resurrection and Advance" won the admiration of all spectators. The idea of the ballet belongs to Hussein Ali. The music was composed by Sa'ad Mahmoud and was orchestrated by George Mann.

The ballet tells the story of the centuries-long tyranny and oppression suffered by the Arab nation at the hands of colonialists, Zionists and reaction and portrays the unceasing resistance and great sacrifices offered by this nation for attaining its freedom.

A turning point in this continuous struggle came with the



A dance lesson

founding of the Arab Baath Socialist Party, the vanguard party of the Arab nation. The Ballet continues to show how this party led the struggle of the nation in different fronts, offering untold sacrifices and gaining the growing support of the nation. The ballet ends with a moving display of the victory of the July 17 Revolution in Baghdad, which throws the gates wide open for socialist construction.

Though relatively lengthy, the ballet was warmly punctuated with applause. The school has now attained maturity both in music and dancing.



A dance sequence performed by students



King Feisal I, Lawrence's close friend



## The Infernal Liar

### BOOKS

T. E. Lawrence

by Desmond Stewart,  
Publishers: Hamish Hamilton, London, 1977,  
Pages 352; Price £ 7.50

**M**n Desmond Stewart, who has been in close touch with the Arab world for the past twenty years, tackles in this new biography of T. E. Lawrence new aspects in the life of this British spy who was known in Arabia as the "Uncrowned King of Arabia". T. E. Lawrence is still of an immense interest not only to the British who hold him as a national hero who greatly contributed to securing additional and strategically important lands to the British empire, but also to the Arabs whom he did a great disservice by deceiving them into siding with the British against Turkey in the First World War. The Arabs fell an easy prey to the then great imperialist powers namely, Britain and France as a result of the deception hatched by spies like Lawrence who helped in some way or other in creating the present division of the one Arab homeland.

Lawrence was a self-centred egoist who was so much complicated by his background and upbringing. He was an illegitimate son, but rigorously brought up by a puritan mother who had to atone

for the sin of adultery, thus adding to her son's complicated character. He was recruited by the British Intelligence to collect information on the territory through which the Berlin-Baghdad railway passes and to assess the mood of the Arabs who were then under the Turkish yoke. He was a spy who collected useful information, though he was not discreet and his judgement was not always right. This applies, particularly, to the promotion of Feisal who proved a failure. And, interestingly, Mr. Stewart cites in comparison the judgements of another spy H. St. John B. Philby, which after decades proved their worth to Britain.

The British Intelligence provided for Lawrence a real escapade in the deserts of Arabia where he found a fertile land for sowing legends about himself. He worked in the Arab part of the Ottoman Empire under the cover of an archaeologist, as he joined the digging operations carried out by British agents who were such famous archaeologists as Hogarth and Woolley. Lawrence and his masters were wily enough to contain the Arab Revolt and then to guide it in a way as not to conflict with the basic interests of the British Empire.

His ultimate aim, or rather, the extinct British Empire's aim has been completely related in the present day Arab East. Mr. Stewart quotes from Lawrence's report on the "Politics of Mecca" which

concluded that an Arab Revolt would be beneficial to the British Empire because it matches with our immediate aims of the break-up of the Islamic "bloc" and the defeat and disruption of the Ottoman empire, and because the state he (Sharif Hussein) would set up to succeed the Turks would be as harmless to ourselves as Turkey was before she became a tool in the German hands. The Arabs are even less stable than the Turks. If properly handled they would remain in a state of political mosaic, a tissue of small jealous principalities incapable of cohesion and yet always ready to combine against outside force".

Lawrence felt deep sense of guilt towards the Arabs. Whether his feeling was sincere or fake the harm was done. However, if the above quotation is read in the context of the present situation in the Middle East where "Israel" is posing as the most serious menace to the Arabs, of whom two millions have so far been turned into refugees, one should have no illusions about the friendship of Lawrence and his masters with the Arabs. Lawrence was for Jewish money and cheap Arab labour; but he was careful enough not to openly call for a Jewish state, lest his game would be uncovered.

Apart from his "mission of buying people by gold sovereigns, Lawrence acted as an inveterate spy who questioned the Egyptian political offenders during and after the 1919 uprising. However, Mr. Stewart did not elaborate on this side of Lawrence's character. No doubt, he used violence to break down and intimidate the Egyptians detained for resisting British occupation. Researching this side of Lawrence's character would have cast more light on Lawrence's sado-masochistic proclivities.

The famous Deraa incident, which he confessed to his benefactress, Charlotte Shaw, (by the way, she called him an Infernal Liar) had left a very important impact on his life. In "Seven Pillars of Wisdom" (Lawrence's thick book on the Arab Revolt) he narrated that he had been arrested by a Turkish NCO and taken to a Turkish officer. Before seeing the officer he was told that he would be released if he met the desire of the Turkish Bey commanding the military post in Deraa. He claimed that he was flagellated and sodomized by the Turkish officer. From this incident until his death, Lawrence, for unknown reasons, used to celebrate the Deraa anniversary by being flagellated by special sort of a birch. Not only that, he used to attend flogging sessions inflicted also by some mysterious persons. In the present biography Mr. Stewart dismisses this incident writing, "The story's internal lack of coherence is a yet more decisive factor for rejecting it as true in the sense of historically accurate.

The justification of the flogging is that "Deraa represented the discovery that, for him, as for Swinburne before him, pain was the vital ingredient, if not for pleasure, then release". The one difference, however, between Swinburne and Lawrence, is that the former loved to receive pain from women, whereas Lawrence loved to receive it from sturdy men. The Deraa incident might have been legendary like the many incidents for which he gave more than one account, and each account was somehow different from the other. When some of the documents on Lawrence's life were published several years ago, a Syrian Arab who was serving in the Ottoman army had written in a Beirut newspaper that he was the officer-in-charge in Deraa and that Lawrence was never treated in the humiliating way he claimed to have been treated.

One of Lawrence's missions in Iraq was a total failure. He came to Iraq in the Spring of 1916 to bargain the release of 13000 British and Indian troops who were under siege inside Kut. The Turkish commander refused a bribe of one million gold sovereigns. He refused the bribe even when its amount was doubled. The British suffered a big propaganda setback when the German papers carried banner headlines about "The Nation of Shopkeepers".

The dedication of "Seven Pillars of Wisdom" to S.A. posed as a riddle to the biographers of Lawrence. The confusion was further enhanced by Lawrence himself who made different claims about these initials. The most common theory was that S. A. are the initials of Sheikh Ahmed to whom Lawrence was striving to present the independence of Syria. Another is the initials of a donkey-boy or mess waiter or simply Dahoum whom he met and loved in his early days in Arabia. However, one thing is certain, Mr. Stewart writes, the dedication reveals Lawrence's early association with the men of Arabia. Mr. Stewart is of the opinion that the initials stand for Sharif Ali who was also in the words of Lawrence, "physically splendid... no one could see him without the desire to see him again. His beauty was a conscious weapon". Sharif Ali of this dedication was not the eldest son of King Hussein of Hejaz.

Mr. Stewart's task has been difficult for it is not an easy thing to sift the fact from the tremendous lot of legends which Lawrence himself had woven about himself. Still it is a lively biography which throws light on a personality which had a far-reaching, but prejudicial impact on the Arab nation.

Adnan al-Himairi



## POETRY

by Abdul Wahab al-Bayati

### To Rafael Alberti

(1)

The last child in exile, weeping for Madrid.  
Singing the five of the Spanish exiled dead poets: Lorca-Machado.  
The last giant in his coat weeping  
Under the Polar Star  
Under under the snow.  
We stood by the light post, and "Rome was looking for Rome,"  
I called you: Alberti  
Verse replied:  
Lightning hidden in clouds bleeding  
In the night of exile lit.  
All the Spaniards' tortures  
Replied: Rome.  
And the wild sea-music replied: We were children  
Who went far into the forest, but the music quietened  
and the sea.  
Hid in books narrating about light to come from  
Inside Toledo, about an Arabic star roaming in  
Europe and sleeping at the Gate of Toledo. We were children  
In the exile-homeland building cities for love.  
Verse, lightning, music replied:  
The last giant in his coat weeping, and the Spanish rain  
Dries on the forest trees. Machado  
At dawn dies ill and lonely. All tortures  
Of the Spaniards return, so that this blue fire is born.  
Books, music, verse,  
Paintings,  
We stood. I called you: Alberti  
And answered the child, the man, the verse.  
And Rome was looking for Rome in a secret circulation  
Or a woman's eye probing a sky that had not rained,  
Or an undrunk cup of wine. Rome was rising up



From under the debris.  
We stood under the light post; we saw the fire  
Of the exiled dead Spanish poets: Lorca, Machado  
And we saw the Arab coming from Toledo, my seventh  
Great grandfather in his leather coat led to  
Death or exile.  
I called you: Alberti  
And answered the verse  
And the last child in exile weeping the fatherland  
And weeping Madrid.

- (2) Rome's gates are firmly closed: a wild autumn sheltering  
Behind the mask of silence bursting cold, wailing and  
begging of an angel  
In rags.
- (3) My verse left me this fatal poverty, this  
Love, the flame: the deadly sword  
will one day sever my neck for the sake of the poor.
- (4) Down with the kings of the stone age, the parrots.  
Down with the poets of generals.
- (5) My love destroyed me:  
Rome was destroyed by the earthquake.
- (6) I said: Peace on the Mediterranean.  
I said: peace on the forests.  
But the exiled dead were everywhere in ambushade.
- (7) Rome is asleep: I am listening to the dawn coming  
from behind doors.
- (8) I called you: Alberti  
And answered the shouts of the exiled Spaniards  
Everywhere man is sentenced a death.

translated from Arabic  
by Kadhim Sa'adeen

## SHORT STORY

by Adel Kamel

### The Child

When the ground vibrated and the demonstrators' outcries went high, nothing came into the child's mind save a peculiar picture that frightened her. She imagined that a new war had broken out, for she was still remembering the air raids, fires, soldiers attacking her village.

She walked fast across the lane, not observing the other children running towards the main street. She was anxious to reach home, or, in fact, the room in which her mother, grandfather and elder sister resided. She, however, stopped for a while owing to the shrill shouts, clamour, mingling

of high voices and vibration of the ground. Looking backwards, she saw dust mixed with shadows of men. It occurred to her, once more, that soldiers had waged an attack and war had just broken out! She ran as fast as she could, thinking distractedly.

She lived at that large city for a few months only, yet, she was going to leave it for another place because of war. The child felt sad, but being afraid, she forgot everything save that her father was killed in a war and her brother was still an infant. She started, then, reviewing many pictures. Whenever she remembered a distressing picture

she was struck with fear, sweating and her body quivered. Finding herself exhausted, she merely gave way to crying.

She arrived at the door of the large home which was overcrowded with lodgers. She knocked at the closed door, doing it many times. Nobody answered. Besides none of the passers-by paid any attention to her! She turned her head appealing for help, but people were walking in haste, the clamour was rising higher, the reverberations of voices never ending. She dreamed that she had opened the door and lent a helping hand to her blind grandfather. She, anyhow, was awake again, knocking at the door violently. After a while, an old woman opened the door, but the child was so tired that she was about to collapse. She, thereafter, got

back her strength and walked fast. She went upstairs with wide steps and when she approached the room she saw her grandfather advancing towards her.

"Where have you been?", he enquired.

Speechless, she hit the ground violently and jumped, clinging tightly to his shoulder trying to hide her head. She uttered no word; her fatigued body calmed down. The grandfather felt her high heat and occasional quiverings of her small body. But, he soon began thinking of something else. He, then, perceived that the child was sleeping on his shoulder. Trying to awaken her, he realised that she was on deep slumber. He left her and walked, leaving his home, too. With others he found him-



self shouting loudly. Sadly did he realise that his voice was very feeble. Notwithstanding that, he continued crying out as hard as he could:

"AGAINST OCCUPATION!"  
 "AGAINST ENEMIES!"  
 "AGAINST... AGAINST...!"

He was unable to know for where the demonstrators were heading; at what street, the number of the demonstrators... He was just walking together with them from street to street, from square to square. He was aspiring to see his child awake to help him know the places and all the other things. She, some moments later, awakened trembling and trying to behold nothing.

"Oh, my child!"

She opened one eye and saw multitudes of people shouting loudly; she saw dust mixing with sunbeams:

"Is this war? Has her grandfather fled with her to a safe place as he had done before?"

"No..."

She raised her head, bringing it nearer to her grandfather's and whispered:

"Grandfather..."

He answered in a low and feeble voice:

"Get up... How dare you sleep and all people...?"

Fully awake, she began talking:

"We are in a large square, grandfather."

She hardly could stop crying, for she found no end of the throngs of people. She then wept

bitterly and dried her tears. Listening to somebody's speech, she noticed that her grandfather was also weeping.

"Why are you weeping, grandfather?!", she enquired.

"....."  
 He uttered no word for he was unable to express his depths which exploded with feelings that could not be calmed down or tamed. The old man found at a city far-off from his village brothers so ebullient that no force whatever it might be could put their enthusiasm out. That feeling of union made the child soar high. The old man continued shouting:

"With blood... with blood!"

It occurred to the child, while smiling, that she would never forget the war calamities; her father's murder, the flee from the village, guns bombardment... These pictures would never fade away from her mind.

"From now on, I won't be afraid... I must not run away", wondered she.

On their way back, she was shouting loudly with others wishing not to go home. But, the grandfather said gently:

"Wonderful, difficult and never ending days are going surely to begin...".

Translated from Arabic original by  
**Hashim Gati' Lazim**

## ARTS



Sulhan Selim Masoun, oil painting by al-Jadir

by Jassim al-Mutairi

where he joined the Painting Section of the Academy of Art. Finally, the Sorbonne University conferred on him a doctorate in art. His thesis was on "Iraqi Painting During the Islamic Middle Ages".

In 1954, he returned home to join the Fine Arts Institute. Five years after he became the Principal of the Institute of Fine Arts; and in 1961 he founded the first Academy of Fine Arts. He



Sulhan Selim Masoun, oil painting by al-Jadir

## Dr. Khalid al-Jadir's Paintings acclaimed in Berlin

**S** elected works of Iraqi painter, Dr. Khalid al-Jadir, were recently received in Berlin with keen interest.

The works, which were exhibited in the spacious gallery of the city's important Old Museum, were heralded by a flood of posters depicting one of the artist's famous and magnificent paintings of a "Nomadic Arab Camp". The duration of the exhibition which was opened last April, had to be extended, due to incessant flow of visitors. Artists, critics and journalists of Berlin expressed high appreciation of the works of the Iraqi painter.

Altogether 83 works were displayed. They portrayed the different aspects of the life in Iraqi

towns, villages and remote rural areas and reflected the characteristics of the Iraqi citizen and his love for work. Of these works 45 were oil paintings and 38 were sketches in Chinese ink.

One cultural magazine in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) evaluated the exhibition in these words: "The personality of artist Khalid al-Jadir is distinctly reflected in his sketches of the life of the people of Iraq in villages and small towns. As to his artistic taste, one cannot help saying that it is of a high standard".

Khalid al-Jadir graduated from Baghdad's Institute of Fine Arts in 1946. A year later, he obtained the diploma of the faculty of law. Thereafter, he left for Paris,

represented Iraqi artists in the UNESCO in 1959. He was later elected President of the Iraqi Artists Association.

Dr. al-Jadir held many exhibitions inside and outside Iraq. His exhibitions abroad which began in 1959 were held in the GDR, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Denmark, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Belgium, France, China, India, Poland and the USA. In all these places, his works won the interest and respect of the visitors and many articles and studies were written about him.

The recent exhibition in Berlin clearly reflected the originality of the people of Iraq and their determination to build a new life. The works of Dr. al-Jadir are known to be closely connected with the unique traditions of his people. They are also characterized by a conspicuous illustration of the life of craftsmen, a deep sense of the beauty of nature and a genuine love for popular heritage and Baghdad's old quarters.



## A STORY OF AN ARAB CALIPH

# Al-Mansur

**C**aliph Abu al-Abbas nominated his brother Jafar (Ibn Muhammad bin Ali) for the caliphate before he died. Jafar who took the name, al-Mansur Billah or, supported by God with victory, was one of the greatest of the Abbasids, and the thirty-five caliphs who came after him were all his lineal dependents. In his time the Islamic Arab caliphate was reaching maturity and moving towards culture, literature, and the arts.

Mansur, the grim, efficient and imaginative builder of Baghdad was a slender, tall man of dark complexion and thin beard, according to the Arab historian al-Tabari. He had a real talent for statesmanship and organization and an intelligent appreciation of religions now essential in Islamic policy. He made it his business to eliminate, as much as possible, the privilege which had been associated with the Arabs during the Umayyad Cali-

phate, and gave equal rights to the gentile and non-Muslims of the state. He made some constitutional reforms, and developed the institution of "wazir" or, minister of state's. The wazir's duty was the interpretation of the caliph's wishes to the people, and as a consequence, very heavy responsibilities devolved upon him. The first wazir, was Khalid bin Barmecide, who had been a close friend to the previous caliph.

Al-Mansur was well read and interested in literature. It was his interest that planted the flower of literature in Baghdad which grew rampantly in the years that followed. Its perfume is still lingering in the Arabic and Islamic societies today. The Arab scholars of Mansur's time assimilated what had taken the Greeks centuries to develop. Linking southern Europe with the Near East, the culture was led by a single stream, a stream with sources in ancient Egypt, Sumar,

Babylon, Assyria, Phoenicia and Palestine, flowing to Greece and then returning to the east in the form of Hellenism, the culture, ideals and pattern of life of Greece as represented in Athens at that time. This same stream was later redirected into Europe by the Arabs through Spain and Sicily, whence it helped create the renaissance of Europe.

The Greeks had become an indigenous part of the Arab society since many had been living in the east from the time of Alexander. Others, fleeing Byzantine intellectual oppression, found freedom to continue their work in the Arab world. The caliph, in his thirst for knowledge obtained from the Byzantine emperor important Greek scientific and philosophical books which he subsequently ordered to be translated. He depended at first upon translations made by his subjects. One of the pioneer translators from Greek was Abu Yahya (Ibn al-Batriq) who is credited with having translated for al-Mansur, the major works of the Greek physicians Galen and Hippocrates. He also translated, for another patron, most of

the work of Ptolemy, the famous Greco-Egyptian astronomer. Not only did the Arabs accumulate the knowledge of Greece, they researched from sources throughout the ancient world, translating the Indian works on astronomy and mathematics. Much of this work laid the foundation on which the Arabs were to build and achieve their greatest advancements in science and medicine.

During al-Mansur's reign the first historians of Islam began to write. The Basra schools became famous for their grammarians of the Arabic language and the interest in book-learning was on the increase.

Al-Mansur set the cornerstone for the period of the Abbasid caliphate which is best remembered and most appreciated of all Iraqi history. It has left an immense volume of tradition, many famous names and a record of great achievements.

Al-Mansur, was opposed to drinking "khamr, or wine" and would not allow music, frowning upon every kind of frivolity. Once his authority was undisputed, he was careful in the enforcement of justice and would not permit provincial governors to carry the death sentence without conferring with him. He was undoubtedly a capable ruler and a painstaking administrator.

In the spring of the year 762, the caliph undertook long personal reconnaissances extending as far north as Mosul to find the ideal site for a new capital. He selected a position on the west bank of the Tigris, at the nearby ruins of "Salman Pak". Some historians say it was an area of Akkad in the early ages, while others say it was near Opis, in

Iraq. After lengthy consultation with his advisers and later with peasants living in the locality, he eventually chose a site. The city was at first known as "Madinat al-Salam, or the city of peace," but gradually the name "Baghdad, or splendour" replaced the former title. When the plans had been drawn and the map of the new capital laid before him, al-Mansur spoke as follows: "In the name of the most merciful God, praise be longed unto him, and the earth is his, he causeth such of his servants as he pleaseth to inherit the pious, now with the blessing of God, build on."

Mansur devoted himself passionately to the supervision of the building and work, even himself measuring up the quantities of bricks and lime. He also checked the accounts, verifying the costs and the wages of the workers. One hundred thousand architects, craftsmen and labourers were employed from all over the caliphate. The city was made completely round and inside the double circle of walls were four gates. In the centre of the inner city was built the palace of the caliph, who would be symbolically at the very heart and centre of the Arab state. Upon the dome of the palace stood a figure of a horseman which might have served as a weathercock. Other space within the inner walls of the new city was devoted to a mosque and offices of various government departments, while the space between the two rings of walls was allotted to residential houses for officers and officials.

It took four years to build the round city of Mansur, and a few years after its completion, the suburbs had already spread up and down the west bank of

the Tigris. Mansur then built a new palace immediately overlooking the river. It was named the palace of "Khuld, or immortality". Further north, a third palace called "al-Rusafa, or causeway," was erected, intended for the crown prince, the caliph's son al-Mahdi. During this time of massive building and construction the cities of Kufa and Basra were each surrounded by walls and a moat. Mansur also had the Dome of the Rock Mosque rebuilt after an earthquake had hit Jerusalem.

As if called into existence by a magician's wand the city of al-Mansur fell heir to the power and prestige of Babylon, Nineveh, Ur and other capitals of the ancient orient. The early city of Baghdad, constructed entirely with need of political administration in mind, had within thirty years become one of the largest cities in the Mediterranean world. It was the seat of learning and art for scholars from all over the Middle East. Intermingling Greek, Indian, Arab thought and talent, Baghdad became the social and cultural centre of the East.



Al-Mansur Billah

The city was located at a point where the Euphrates and the Tigris approached within twenty miles of one another. It was in the eighth century that the navigable Isa Canal was built joining the Euphrates with the Tigris at the gates of Baghdad. Thus the products of Syria could reach the capital by water down the Euphrates, in the same manner that the trade with India and the Arabian Gulf came up the Tigris. The main land route from the east to the rest of the caliphate passed through the location of Baghdad, which had been a centre of trade.

The Arab traders ventured from Basra to as far as China in the east bringing silk and paper to their people. While their coins reached Scandinavia, there is some evidence that Arab traders also reached the English Channel since fine glassware of this era from eastern Syria, has been unearthed in London.

In August 775, Mansur set out with a large convoy to perform the pilgrimage to Mecca. He had suffered for some years from digestive troubles and had consulted many doctors without result. After leaving Kufa his pains became more acute, but he struggled until he had reached within a day's march from Mecca. He died at dawn in his tent, on the day on which he had hoped to reach the holy city. He was sixty-four years of age and had reigned for twenty-two years.

Although al-Mansur died, the flower that he planted in Baghdad kept growing for many generations, becoming an unremovable part of the culture, religion and heritage of the Arab people. Al-Mansur was receptive and opened his doors to all breezes and to all songs. From the Greek

culture to the Indian culture, the winds of the west and the east melted in the cultural pot of the Arabs. Inheriting all the ancient civilizations in the Mediterranean, Islam opened her heart to the people and cultures of her far-flung homeland.

Mansur, the builder of Baghdad and the founder of the Arab Islamic science is still remembered in the Baghdad of today. A carving of his head, executed by al-Rahal, a Baghdadi sculptor,

stands three and one-half meters above its base, a monument of twice that height. This monument is set on an old tower restored from the ancient wall surrounding Baghdad. Inside the tower, the walls are decorated with Islamic designs and a relief sculpture depicting al-Mansur with his aides and engineers selecting the site of Baghdad.

**Joseph Almaleh &  
Jacqui Underwood**



Gypsum decoration from the Abbasid period

#### RCC RATIFIES OPEC FUND AGREEMENT

The Revolution Command Council (RCC) ratified late last month the agreement of establishing a Special Fund for the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), signed in Paris on January 28, 1976.

The OPEC Algiers summit conference held in March, 1976 stressed the necessity of consolidating the solidarity of OPEC with the developing countries and resolved to take necessary steps for boosting cooperation with these countries and extending to them aids to help them surmount their financial difficulties.

#### RECORD ALLOCATION FOR HOUSING

RCC member and Minister of Works and Housing Mr. Taha Yassin Ramadan said allocations for housing in the current Five-Year Plan (1976-1980) are expected to exceed ID. 1,000 million (3.3 billion US dollars). The figure is three times higher than the previous Five-year Plan allocation.

#### IRAQI-BULGARIAN ECONOMIC COOPERATION

Iraq's Minister of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform, Mr. Latif Nasseef Jassim, recently led an official delegation to Sofia to attend the meetings of the joint Iraq-Bulgarian committee for economic, scientific and technical cooperation.

The meetings, which took place in the first week of August, dealt with various aspects of cooperation in the economic, scientific and technical spheres between Iraq and Bulgaria. The two sides also installed a protocol for cooperation in the forthcoming year.

#### AZIZ SHARIF ON AFRICAN TOUR

Mr. Aziz Sharif, Vice-chairman of the World Peace Council (WPC) and President of the Iraqi National Council for Peace and Solidarity will lead the WPC delegation to four African countries bordering the racist regimes of South Africa and Rhodesia.

The 20-day tour is in implementation of a resolution passed by the world conference against apartheid, racism and colonialism in South Africa held in Lisbon in June last. The tour will cover Tanzania, Botswana, Mozambique and Zambia.

NEWS IN BRIEF

#### IRAQI-BRAZILIAN OIL COOPERATION

An Iraqi delegation, led by Mr. Abdul Mune'm Hassan, Oil Ministry undersecretary for Establishment Affairs, will visit Brazil this month for talks on the consolidation of bilateral relations and economic and technical cooperation between the two countries.

The talks will also cover the questions of further expanding the basis of cooperation with the Brazilian Petroleum organization, especially with regard to the research institute of Braspetro Company of Brazil.

#### I.D. 41 MILLION CONTRACT SIGNED

Iraq and two international firms, signed in Baghdad on July 30 last a contract for the construction of 28 industrial and technological schools at a total cost of ID. 41,824,000 (135 m. US dollars).

The contract provides for complete construction of the schools within two years period. The schools have been designed to provide technical cadres needed for the comprehensive development projects.

#### IOJ SECRETARY GENERAL VISITS IRAQ

Mr. O. Nestor, Secretary General of the International Organization of Journalists (IOJ) left Baghdad on August 2, winding up a week-long visit to Iraq. During the visit he had talks with Iraqi officials and journalists on the convening in Baghdad in November next of an international symposium to counter the influence of Western mass media on the information of third world countries.

#### ARAB HOUSING MINISTER COORDINATING COMMITTEE MEET IN BAGHDAD

The 5-member follow-up and coordination committee, set up by the 2nd Arab Housing and Construction Ministers Conference, met in Baghdad on August 13, to review the implementation of recommendations passed by the conference.

The committee is made up of representatives from Iraq, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Tunisia.



