Naeim GILADI

BEN-GURION'S SCANDALS

How the Hagannah and The Mossad Eliminated Jews

Available for ther first time since ity was banned in the US and Israel

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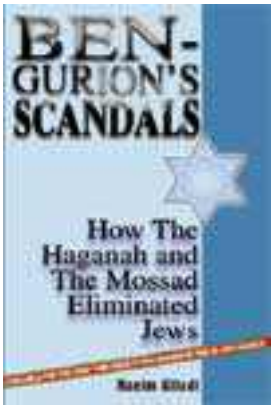

When Naeim Giladi first came upon the research material he used for this book, he was shocked. He did not believe that Jews would kill other Jews for political objectives. Never before has anything been published like this. These are all true and shocking facts.

Foreword

Dear Reader:

This story could have been told nearly forty years ago. I had accumulated a great deal of research material pertaining to the sinking and attempted sabotage of the ships Patria and Struma. Also a ship called Empire Life Guard was planted with bombs with a delay-switch. However the timing device failed to work at the set time, and the ship exploded in the port of Haifa with loss of life. All these ships carried the remnants of European Jewry that had escaped the fury of Hitler's Third Reich.

Not as lucky was Egoz, a small boat that sank off the shores of Morocco while carrying Jewish children out of Morocco. I was incensed that these innocent victims were sacrificed on the altar of statehood. In addition, the Arab village of Qibyah was attacked on October 14, 1953. Sixty-nine defenseless men, women and children were mercilessly massacred. It was rumored that the Israeli army was the perpetrator of the massacre, but Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion officially denied this. He said: "We checked and found that not one army unit left the base that night."

Two days later, I met a friend who lived in a Jewish colony across the border from Qibyah. He told me that he saw fully armed Israeli soldiers under the command of Ariel Sharon cross the border in the direction of Qibyah that very same night. David Ben-Gurion had indeed ordered the operation in spite of his denials. He also denied subsequent cover-ups, such as the massacre of the passengers of a bus near Maaleh Ha'akrabim. The Israeli government wrongfully accused Arabs, while it was a Jewish gang that committed the massacre. With much research, I later found evidence proving the involvement of yet another massacre sponsored by the Israeli government. It was at this point that I decided to write what I had discovered because I knew the truth couldn't be hidden without damaging what I believed at that time to be the refuge for the Jews.

I learned that before one could publish a book in Israel, permission had to be granted by the censors of this so-called democracy. If the censors deemed that a story could be harmful to the state, they would withhold permission to publish it. If one still persisted and gained permission to publish, censorship would make so many deletions, the book would be unreadable. If one managed to publish without the permission of the censors, one would be liable to arrest and incarceration for as long as the authorities would decide.

When I was contemplating writing and publishing this book, two of my colleagues and well known Israeli journalists were arrested and put in jail for exposing the involvement of the Israeli secret police (Mossad) in the kidnapping in Paris of Mehdi Ben-Barka, a popular Moroccan socialist leader. The foreign press throughout the world had already disclosed this information. Maxim Gilan and Samuel Mour were nonetheless charged with crimes against national security and were locked up for six months. Moreover, the Israeli media were gagged and not even allowed to mention that the two journalists had been arrested. If the authorities had wished, the two men would have been kept in jail for the rest of their lives.

My friends advised me to wait until I was out of the country before publishing my book, thus avoiding a confrontation with the Israeli censors. Before making my decision, I contacted a number of foreign reporters based in Israel and asked them if they could publish without being checked by the Israeli censors. They told me that everything they wrote had to be cleared by Israeli censors who were the only ones who could fax their material out of the country. If they tried to circumvent the Israeli censors, they would never be allowed to work in Israel again.

Years later, I immigrated to the United States. I contacted some important American publishers and I found a great deal of interest and willingness to publish my work. But when it was time to sign a contract, the publishers demanded that I give them the right to delete or change any part of the book they wished. For me, this constituted a form of censorship. I turned down their offers even though it meant a substantial loss of income. However, I never regretted my decision. Thanks to the help of many friends, I managed to publish in its integrity the first edition of this book. Now, at last I have found a publisher, Dandelion Books, whose mission is to deliver the truth, uncensored, because they understand the full implications of living in deception and self-denial. Hence, the second edition of my book with additions and revisions.

Naeim Giladi

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The Jews of Iraq

Publisher's Note:

Chapter One of this book was originally an article by Naeim Giladi, edited by John Mahoney, Executive Director of Americans for Middle East Understanding. It first appeared in the April-May 1998 issue of *The Link*, the AMEU magazine.

On March 16, 1998, two days prior to his 69th birthday, Mahoney interviewed Naeim Gildadi for three hours.

"Then, for nearly two more delightful hours," recalls Mahoney, "we were treated to a multi-course Arabic meal prepared by his wife Rachael, who is also Iraqi.

"It's our Arab culture," Mr. Giladi said proudly.

Writes Mahoney in the introduction to the article:

In our previous *Link*, Israeli historian Ilan Pappe looked at the hundreds of thousands of indigenous Palestinians whose lives were uprooted to make room for foreigners who would come to populate confiscated land. Most were Ashkenazi Jews from Eastern Europe. But over half a million other Jews came from Islamic lands. Zionist propagandists claim that Israel "rescued" these Jews from their antiJewish, Muslim neighbors. One of those "rescued" Jews – Naeirn Giladi – knows otherwise.

In this article, Mr. Giladi discusses the crimes committed by Zionists in their frenzy to import raw Jewish labor. Newly-vacated farmlands had to be plowed to provide food for the immigrants and the military ranks had to be filled with conscripts to defend the stolen lands.

Mr. Giladi couldn't get this book published in Israel, and even in the U.S. he discovered he could do so only if he used his own money.

The Giladi's, now U.S. citizens, live in New York City. By choice, they no longer hold Israeli citizenship. "I am Iraqi," he told us, "born in Iraq, my culture still Iraqi Arabic, my religion Jewish, my citizenship American."

We are extremely grateful to John Mahoney for introducing Mr. Giladi to Dandelion Books so we could have this opportunity to re-issue *Ben-Gurion's Scandals: How the Haganah and The Mossad Eliminated Jews.*

Carol Adler, President, Dandelion Books, LLC

* * *

I write this article for the same reason I wrote my book: to tell the American people, and especially American Jews, that Jews from Islamic lands did not emigrate willingly to Israel; that, to force them to leave, Jews killed Jews; and that, to buy time to confiscate ever more Arab lands, Jews on numerous occasions rejected genuine peace initiatives from their Arab neighbors. I write about what the first prime minister of Israel called "cruel Zionism." I write about it because I was part of it.

My Story

Of course I thought I knew it all back then. I was young, idealistic, and more than willing to put my life at risk for my convictions. It was 1947 and I wasn't quite 18 when the Iraqi authorities caught me for smuggling young Iraqi Jews like myself out of Iraq, into Iran, and then on to the Promised Land of the soon-to-be established Israel.

I was an Iraqi Jew in the Zionist underground. My Iraqi jailers did everything they could to extract the names of my co-conspirators.

Fifty years later, pain still throbs in my right toe-a reminder of the day my captors used pliers to remove my toenails. On another occasion, they hauled me to the flat roof of the prison, stripped me bare on a frigid January day, then threw a bucket of cold water over me. I was left there, chained to the railing, for hours. But I never once considered giving them the informat ion they wanted. I was a true believer.

My preoccupation during what I refer to as my "two years in hell" was with survival and escape. I had no interest then in the broad sweep of Jewish history in Iraq even though my family had been part of it right from the beginning. We were originally Haroons, a large and important family of the "Babylonian Diaspora." My ancestors had settled in Iraq more than 2,600 years ago- 600 years before Christianity, and 1,200 years before Islam. I am descended from Jews who built the tomb of Yehezkel, a Jewish prophet of pre-biblical times. My town, where I was born in 1929, is Hillah, not far from the ancient site of Babylon.

The original Jews found Babylon, with its nourishing Tigris and Euphrates rivers, to be truly a land of milk, honey, abundance-and opportunity. Although Jews, like other minorities in what became Iraq, experienced periods of oppression and discrimination depending on the rulers of the period, their general trajectory over two and one-half millennia was upward. Under the late Ottoman rule, for example, Jewish social and religious institutions, schools and medical facilities flourished without outside interference, and Jews were prominent in government and business.

As I sat there in my cell, unaware that a death sentence soon would be handed down against me, I could not have recounted any personal grievances that my family members would have lodged against the government or the Muslim majority. Our family had been treated well and had prospered, first as farmers with some 50,000 acres devoted to rice, dates and Arab horses. Then, with the Ottomans, we bought and purified gold that was shipped to Istanbul and turned into coinage. The Turks were responsible in fact for changing our name to reflect our occupation-we became Khalaschi, meaning "Makers of Pure."

I did not volunteer the information to my father that I had joined the Zionist underground. He found out several months before I was arrested when he saw me writing Hebrew and using words and expressions unfamiliar to him. He was even more surprised to learn that, yes, I had decided I would soon move to Israel myself. He was scornful. "You'll come back with your tail between your legs," he predicted.

About 125,000 Jews left Iraq for Israel in the late 1940s and into 1952, mostly because they had been lied to and put into a panic by what I came to learn were Zionist bombs. But my mother and father were among the 6,000 who did not go to Israel. Although physically I never did return to Iraq-that bridge had been burned in any event-my heart has made the journey there many, many times. My father had it right.

I was imprisoned at the military camp of Abu-Greib, about seven miles from Baghdad. When the military court handed down my sentence of death by hanging, I had nothing to lose by attempting the escape I had been planning for many months.

It was a strange recipe for an escape: a dab of butter, an orange peel, and some army clothing that I had asked a friend to buy for me at a flea market. I deliberately ate as much bread as I could to put on fat in anticipation of the day I became 18, when they could formally charge me with a crime and attach the 50-pound ball and chain that was standard prisoner issue.

Later, after my leg had been shackled, I went on a starvation diet that often left me weak-kneed. The pat of butter was to lubricate my leg in preparation for extricating it from the metal band. The orange peel I surreptitiously stuck into the lock on the night of my planned escape, having studied how it could be placed in such a way as to keep the lock from closing.

As the jailers turned to go after locking up, I put on the old army issue that was indistinguishable from what they were wearing-a long, green coat and a stocking cap that I pulled down over much of my face (it was winter). Then I just quietly opened the door and joined the departing group of soldiers as they strode down the hall and outside, and I offered a "good night" to the shift guard as I left. A friend with a car was waiting to speed me away.

Later I made my way to the new state of Israel, arriving in May 1950. My passport had my name in Arabic and English, but the English couldn't capture the "kh" sound, so it was rendered simply as Klaski. At the border, the immigration people applied the English version, which had an Eastern European, Ashkenazi ring to it. In one way, this "mistake" was my key to discovering very soon just how the Israeli caste system worked.

They asked me where I wanted to go and what I wanted to do. I was the son of a farmer; I knew all the problems of the farm, so I volunteered to go to Dafnah, a farming kibbutz in the high Galilee.

I only lasted a few weeks. The new immigrants were given the worst of everything. The food was the same, but that was the only thing that everyone had in common. For the immigrants, bad cigarettes, even bad toothpaste. Everything. I left.

Then, through the Jewish Agency, I was advised to go to al-Majdal (later renamed Ashkelon), an Arab town about 9 miles from Gaza, close to the Mediterranean. The Israeli government planned to turn it into a farmersl city, so my farm background would be an asset there.

When I reported to the Labor Office in al-Majdal, they saw that I could read and write Arabic and Hebrew and they said I could find a good-paying job with the Military Governor's office. The Arabs were under the authority of these Israeli Military Governors.

A clerk handed me a bunch of forms in Arabic and Hebrew. Now it dawned on me. Before Israel could establish its farmers' city, it had to rid al-Majdal of its indigenous Palestinians. The forms were petitions to the United Nations Inspectors asking for transfer out of Israel to Gaza, which was under Egyptian control.

I read over the petition. In signing, the Palestinian would be saying he was of sound mind and body and was making the request for transfer free of pressure or duress. Of course, there was no way they would leave without being pressured to do so. These families had been there for hundreds of years, as farmers, primitive artisans and weavers. The Military Governor prohibited them from pursuing their live livelihoods-just penned

them up until they lost hope of resuming their normal lives. That's when they signed to leave.

I was there and heard their grief. "Our hearts are in pain when we look at the orange trees that we planted with our own hands. Please let us go, let us give water to those trees. God will not be pleased with us if we leave His trees untended." I asked the Military Governor to give them relief, but he said, "No, we want them to leave."

I could no longer be part of this oppression and I left. Those Palestinians who didn't sign up for transfers were taken by force-just put in trucks and dumped in Gaza. About four thousand people were driven from al-Majdal in one way or another. The few who remained were collaborators with the Israeli authorities.

Subsequently, I wrote letters trying to get a government job elsewhere and I got many immediate responses asking me to come for an interview. Then they would discover that my face didn't match my Polish/Ashkenazi name. They would ask if I spoke Yiddish or Polish, and when I said I didn't, they would ask where I came by a Polish name. Desperate for a good job, I would usually say that I thought my greatgrandfather was from Poland. I was advised time and again, "we'll give you a call."

Eventually, three to four years after coming to Israel, I changed my name to Giladi, which is close to the code name, Gilad, that I had in the Zionist underground. Klaski wasn't doing me any good anyway, and my Eastern friends were always chiding me about the name they knew didn't go with my origins as an Iraqi Jew.

I was disillusioned at what I found in the Promised Land, disillusioned personally, disillusioned at the institutionalized racism, disillusioned at what I was beginning to learn about Zionism's cruelties. The principal interest Israel had in Jews from Islamic countries was as a supply of cheap labor, especially for the farm work that was beneath the urbanized Eastern European Jews. Ben-Gurion needed the "Oriental" Jews to farm the thousands of acres of land left by Palestinians who were driven out by Israeli forces in 1948.

I began to find out about the barbaric methods used to rid the fledgling state of as many Palestinians as possible. The world recoils today at the thought of bacteriological warfare, but Israel was probably the first to actually use it in the Middle East. In the 1948 war, Jewish forces would empty Arab villages of their populations, often by threats, sometimes by just gunning down a half-dozen unarmed Arabs as examples to the rest. To make sure the Arabs couldn't return to make a fresh life for themselves in these villages, the Israelis put typhus and dysentery bacteria into the water wells.

Uri Mileshtin, an official historian for the Israeli Defense Force, has written and spoken about the use of bacteriological agents. ([1]) According to Mileshtin, Moshe Dayan, a division commander at the time, gave orders in 1948 to remove Arabs from their villages, bulldoze their homes, and render water wells unusable with typhus and dysentery bacteria.

Acre was so situated that it could practically defend itself with one big gun, so the Haganah put bacteria into the spring that fed the town. The spring was called Capri and it ran from the north near a kibbutz. The Haganah put typhus bacteria into the water going to Acre, the people got sick, and the Jewish forces occupied Acre. This worked so well, they sent a Haganah division dressed as Arabs into Gaza, where there were Egyptian forces, and the Egyptians caught them putting two cans of bacteria, typhus

[1] / Mileshtin was quoted by the Israeli daily, *Hadashot*, in an article published August 13, 1993. The writer, Sarah Laybobis-Dar, interviewed a number of Israelis who had knowledge of the use of bacteriological weapons in the 1948 war. Mileshtin said bacteria was used to poison the wells of every village. emptied of its Arab inhabitants.

and dysentery into the water supply in wanton disregard of the civilian population. "In war, there is no sentiment," one of the captured Haganah men was quoted as saying.

My activism in Israel began shortly after I received a letter from the Socialist/Zionist Party asking me to help with their Arabic newspaper. When I showed up at their offices at Central House in Tel Aviv, I asked around to see just where I should report. I showed the letter to a couple of people there and, without even looking at it, they would motion me away with the words, "Room No. 8." When I saw that they weren't even reading the letter, I inquired of several others.

But the response was the same, "Room No. 8," with not a glance at the paper I put in front of them.

So I went to Room 8 and saw that it was the Department of Jews from Islamic Countries. I was disgusted and angry. Either I am a member of the party or I'm not. Do I have a different ideology or different politics because I am an Arab Jew? It's segregation, I thought, just like a Negroes' Department. I turned around and walked out. That was the start of my open protests. That same year I organized a demonstration in Ashkelon against Ben-Gurion's racist policies and 10,000 people turned out.

There wasn't much opportunity for those of us who were second class citizens to do much about it when Israel was on a war footing with outside enemies. After the 1967 war, I was in the Army myself and served in the Sinai when there was continued fighting along the Suez Canal. But the cease-fire with Egypt in 1970 gave us our opening. We took to the streets and organized politically to demand equal rights. If it's our country, if we were expected to risk our lives in a border war, then we expected equal treatment.

We mounted the struggle so tenaciously and received so much publicity the Israeli government tried to discredit our movement by calling us "Israel's Black Panthers." They were thinking in racist terms, really, in assuming the Israeli public would reject an organization whose ideology was being compared to that of radical blacks in the United States. But we saw that what we were doing was no different from what blacks in the United States were fighting against-segregation, discrimination, unequal treatment. Rather than reject the label, we adopted it proudly. I had posters of Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, Nelson Mandela and other civil rights activists plastered all over my office.

With the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the Israeli-condoned Sabra and Shatilla massacres, I had had enough of Israel. I became a United States citizen and made certain to revoke my Israeli citizenship. I could never have written and published my book in Israel, not with the censorship they would impose.

Even in America, I had great difficulty finding a publisher because many are subject to pressures of one kind or another from Israel and its friends. I ended up paying $60,000 from my own pocket to publish *Ben-Gurion's Scandals: How the Haganah & the Mossad Eliminated Jews,* virtually the entire proceeds from having sold my house in Israel.

I still was afraid the printer would back out or that legal proceedings would be initiated to stop its publication, like the Israeli government did in an attempt to prevent former Mossad case officer Victor Ostrovsky from publishing his first book. ([2]) *Ben-Gurion's Scandals* had to be translated into English from two languages. I wrote in Hebrew when I was in Israel and hoped to publish the book there, and I wrote in Arabic when I was

[2] / On Sept. 12, 1990, the New York State Supreme Court issued a restraining order at the request of the Israeli government to prevent publication of Ostrovsky's book, *By Way of Deception: The Making and Unmaking of a Mossad Officer.* The New York State Appeals Court lifted the ban the next day.

completing the book after coming to the U.S. But I was so worried that something would stop publication, I told the printer not to wait for the translations to be thoroughly checked and proofread. Now I realize the publicity of a lawsuit would just have created a controversial interest in the book.

I am using bank vault storage for the valuable documents that back up what I have written. These documents, including some that I illegally copied from the archives at Yad Vashem, confirm what I saw myself, what I was told by other witnesses, and what reputable historians and others have written concerning the Zionist bombings in Iraq, Arab peace overtures that were rebuffed, and incidents of violence and death inflicted by Jews on Jews in the cause of creating Israel.

The Riots of 1941

If, as I have said, my family in Iraq was not persecuted personally and I knew no deprivation as a member of the Jewish minority, what led me to the steps of the gallows as a member of the Zionist underground? To answer that question, it is necessary to establish the context of the massacre that occurred in.Baghdad on June 1, 1941, when several hundred Iraqi Jews were killed in riots involving junior officers of the Iraqi army. I was 12 years of age and many of those killed were my friends. I was angry, and very confused.

What I didn't know at the time was that the riots most likely were stirred up by the British, in collusion with a pro-British Iraqi leadership.

With the breakup of the Ottoman Empire following WW I, Iraq came under British "tutelage." Amir Faisal, son of Sharif Hussein who had led the Arab Revolt against the Ottoman sultan, was brought in from Mecca by the British to become King of Iraq in 1921. Many Jews were appointed to key administrative posts, including that of Economics Minister. Britain retained final authority over domestic and external affairs. Britain's pro-Zionist attitude in Palestine, however, triggered a growing anti-Zionist backlash in Iraq, as it did in all Arab countries. Writing at the end of 1934, Sir Francis Humphreys, Britain's Ambassador in Baghdad, noted that, while before WW I Iraqi Jews had enjoyed a more favorable position than any other minority in the country, since then "Zionism has sown dissension between Jews and Arabs, and a bitterness has grown up between the two peoples which did not previously exist." ([3])

King Faisal died in 1933. He was succeeded by his son Ghazi, who died in a motor car accident in 1939. The crown then passed to Ghazi's 4-year-old son, Faisal 11, whose uncle, Abd al-Ilah, was named regent. Abd al-Ilah selected Nouri el-Said as Prime Minister.

El-Said supported the British and, as hatred of the British grew, he was forced from office in March 1940 by four senior army officers who advocated Iraq's independence from Britain. Calling themselves the Golden Square, the officers compelled the regent to name as Prime Minister Rashid Ali al-Kilani, leader of the National Brotherhood party.

The time was 1940 and Britain was reeling from a strong German offensive. Al-Kilani and the Golden Square saw this as their opportunity to rid themselves of the British once and for all.

Cautiously they began to negotiate for German support, which led the pro-British regent Abd al- Ilah to dismiss al-Kilani in January 1941.

By April, however, the Golden Square officers had reinstated the Prime Minister.

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[3] / Marion Woolfson, *Prophets in Babylon: Jews in the Arab World*, p. 129.

This provoked the British to send a military force into Basra on April 12, 1941. Basra, Iraq's second largest city, had a Jewish population of 30,000. Most of these Jews made their livings from import/export, money changing, retailing, as workers in the airports, railways, and ports, or as senior government employees.

On the same day, April 12, supporters of the pro-British regent notified the Jewish leaders that the regent wanted to meet with them. As was their custom, the leaders brought flowers for the regent. Contrary to custom, however, the cars that drove them to the meeting place dropped them off at the site where the British soldiers were concentrated.

Photographs of the Jews appeared in the following day's newspapers with the banner, "BASRA JEWS RECEIVE BRITISH TROOPS WITH FLOWERS."

That same day, April 13, groups of angry Arab youths set about to take revenge against the Jews. Several Muslim notables in Basra heard of the plan and calmed things down. Later, it was learned that the regent was not in Basra at all and that the matter was a provocation by his pro-British supporters to bring about an ethnic war in order to give the British army a pretext to intervene.

The British continued to land more forces in and around Basra. On May 7, 1941, their Gurkha unit, composed of Indian soldiers from that ethnic group, occupied Basra's el-Oshar quarter, a neighborhood with a large Jewish population. The soldiers, led by British officers, began looting. Many shops in the commercial district were plundered. Private homes were broken into. Cases of attempted rape were reported. Local residents, Jews and Muslims, responded with pistols and old rifles, but their bullets were no match for the soldiers' Tommy Guns.

Afterwards, it was learned, that the soldiers acted with the acquiescence, if not the blessing, of their British commanders. (It should be remembered that the Indian soldiers, especially those of the Gurkha unit, were known for their discipline, and it is highly unlikely they would have acted so riotously without orders.) The British goal clearly was to create chaos and to blacken the image of the pro-nationalist regime in Baghdad, thereby giving the British forces reason to proceed to the capital and to overthrow the al-Kilani government.

Baghdad fell on May 30. Al-Kilani fled to Iran, along with the Golden Square officers. Radio stations run by the British reported that Regent Abd al-Ilah would be returning to the city and that thousands of Jews and others were planning to welcome him. What inflamed young Iraqis against the Jews most, however, was the radio announcer Yunas Bahri on the German station "Berlin," who reported in Arabic that Jews from Palestine were fighting, alongside the British against Iraqi soldiers near the city of Faluja. The report was false.

On Sunday, June 1, unarmed fighting broke out in Baghdad between Jews who were still celebrating their Shavuoth holiday and young Iraqis who thought the Jews were celebrating the return of the pro- British regent. That evening, a group of Iraqis stopped a bus, removed the Jewish passengers, murdered one and fatally wounded a second.

About 8:30 the following morning, some 30 individuals in military and police uniforms opened fire along el-Amin Street, a small downtown street whose jewelry, tailor and grocery shops were Jewish-owned. By 11 AM, mobs of Iraqis with knives, switchblades and clubs were attacking Jewish homes in the area.

The riots continued throughout Monday, June 2. During this time, many Muslims rose to defend their Jewish neighbors, while some Jews successfully defended themselves. There were 124 killed and 400 injured, according to a report written by a Jewish Agency messenger who was in Iraq

at the time. Other estimates, possibly less reliable, put the death toll higher, as many as 500, with from 650 to 2,000 injured. From 500 to 1,300 stores and more than 1,000 homes and apartments were looted.

Who was behind the rioting in the Jewish quarter?

Yosef Meir, one of the most prominent activists in the Zionist underground movement in Iraq, known then as Yehoshafat, claims it was the British. Meir, who now works for the Israeli Defense Ministry, argues that in order to make it appear that the regent was returning as the savior who would reestablish law and order, the British stirred up the riots against the most vulnerable and visible segment in the city, the Jews. And, not surprisingly, the riots ended as soon as the regent's loyal soldiers entered the capital. ([4])

My own investigations as a journalist lead me to believe Meir is correct. Furthermore, I think his claims should be seen as based on documents in the archives of the Israeli Defense Ministry, the agency that published his book. Yet, even before his book came out, I had independent confirmation from a man I met in Iran in the late Forties.

His name was Michael Timosian, an Iraqi Armenian. When I met him he was working as a male nurse at the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company in Abadan in the south of Iran. On June 2, 194 1, however, he was working at the Baghdad hospital where many of the riot victims were brought. Most of these victims were Jews.

Timosian said he was particularly interested in two patients whose conduct did not follow local custom. One had been hit by a bullet in his shoulder, the other by a bullet in his right knee. After the doctor removed the bullets, the staff tried to change their bloodsoaked clothes. But the two men fought off their efforts, pretending to be speechless, although tests showed they could hear.

To pacify them, the doctor injected them with anesthetics and, as they were sleeping, Timosian changed their clothes. He discovered that one of them had around his neck an identification tag of the type used by British troops, while the other had tattoos with Indian script on his right arm along with the familiar sword of the Gurkha.

The next day when Timosian showed up for work, he was told that a British officer, his sergeant and two Indian Gurkha soldiers had come to the hospital early that morning. Staff members overheard the Gurkha soldiers talking with the wounded patients, who were not as dumb as they had pretended. The patients saluted the visitors, covered themselves with sheets and, without signing the required release forms, left the hospital with their visitors.

Today there is no doubt in my mind that the antiJewish riots of 1941 were orchestrated by the British for geopolitical ends. David Kimche is certainly a man who was in a position to know the truth, and he has spoken publicly about British culpability. Kimche had been with British Intelligence during WW II and with the Mossad after the war. Later he became Director General of Israel's Foreign Ministry, the position he held in 1982 when he addressed a forum at the British Institute for International Affairs in London.

In responding to hostile questions about Israel's invasion of Lebanon and the refugee camp massacres in Beirut, Kimche went on the attack, reminding the audience that there was scant concern in the British Foreign Office when British Gurkha units participated in the murder of 500 Jews in the streets of Baghdad in 1941. ([5])

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[4] / Yosef Meir, "Road in the Desert," Israeli Defense Ministry, p. 36.
[5] / Quoted from this book, first edition, p. 105.

The Bombings of 1950-1951

The anti-Jewish riots of 1941 did more than create a pretext for the British to enter Baghdad to reinstate the pro-British Regent and his pro-British Prime Minister, Nouri el-Said. They also gave the Zionists in Palestine a pretext to set up a Zionist underground in Iraq, first in Baghdad, then in other cities such as Basra, Amara, Hillah, Diwaneia, Abril and Karkouk.

Following WW II, a succession of governments held brief power in Iraq. Zionist conquests in Palestine, particularly the massacre of Palestinians in the village of Deir Yassin, emboldened the anti-British movement in Iraq. When the Iraqi government signed a new treaty of friendship with London in January 1948, riots broke out all over the country. The treaty was quickly abandoned and Baghdad demanded removal of the British military mission that had run Iraq's army for 27 years.

Later in 1948, Baghdad sent an army detachment to Palestine to fight the Zionists, and when Israel declared independence in May, Iraq closed the pipeline that fed its oil to Haifa's refinery. Abd al-Ilah, however, was still regent and the British quisling, Nouri el-Said, was back as Prime Minister. I was in the Abu-Greib prison in 1948, where I would remain until my escape to Iran in September 1949.

Six. months later–the exact date was March 19, 1950–a bomb went off at the American Cultural Center and Library in Baghdad, causing property damage and injuring a number of people. The center was a favorite meeting place for young Jews.

The first bomb thrown directly at Jews occurred on April 8, 1950, at 9:15 PM. A car with three young passengers hurled the grenade at Baghdad's El-Dar El-Bida Café, where Jews were celebrating Passover.

Four people were seriously injured. That night leaflets were distributed calling on Jews to leave Iraq immediately.

The next day, many Jews, most of them poor with nothing to lose, jammed emigration offices to renounce their citizenship and to apply for permission to leave for Israel. So many applied, in fact, that the police had to open registration offices in Jewish schools and synagogues.

On May 10, at 3 AM, a grenade was tossed in the direction of the display window of the Jewish-owned Beit-Lawi Automobile Company, destroying part of the building. No casualties were reported.

On June 3, 1950, another grenade was tossed from a speeding car in the EI-)3atawin area of Baghdad where most rich Jews and middle class Iraqis lived. No one was hurt, but following the explosion Zionist activists sent telegrams to Israel requesting that the quota for immigration from Iraq be increased.

On June 5, at 2:30 AM, a bomb exploded next to the Jewish-owned Stanley Shashua building on EI-Rashid Street, resulting in property damage but no casualties.

On January 14, 1951, at 7 PM, a grenade was thrown at a group of Jews outside the Masouda Shem-Tov Synagogue. The explosive struck a high-voltage cable, electrocuting three Jews, one a young boy, Itzhak Elmacher, and wounding over 30 others. Following the attack, the exodus of Jews jumped to between 600-700 per day.

Zionist propagandists still maintain that the bombs in Iraq were set off by anti-Jewish Iraqis who wanted Jews out of their country. The terrible truth is that the grenades that killed and maimed Iraqi Jews and damaged their property were thrown by Zionist Jews.

Among the most important documents in the first edition of my book, I believe, are copies of two leaflets published by the Zionist underground calling on Jews to leave Iraq. One is dated March 16, 1950, the other April 8, 1950. The difference between these two is critical. Both indicate the date of publication, but only the April 8th leaflet notes the time of day: 4 PM. Why the time of day? Such a specification was unprecedented. Even the investigating judge, Salaman El-Beit, found it suspicious. Did the 4 PM writers want an alibi for a bombing they knew would occur five hours later? If so, how did they know about the bombing? The judge concluded they knew because a connection existed between the Zionist underground and the bomb throwers.

This, too, was the conclusion of Wilbur Crane Eveland, a former senior officer in the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), whom I had the opportunity to meet in New York in 1988. In his book, *Ropes of Sand,* whose publication the CIA opposed, Eveland writes:

> In attempts to portray the Iraqis as anti-American and to terrorize the Jews, the Zionists planted bombs in the U.S. Information Service library and in synagogues. Soon leaflets began to appear urging Jews to flee to Israel ... Although the Iraqi police later provided our embassy with evidence to show that the synagogue and library bombings, as well as the anti-Jewish and anti-American leaflet campaigns, had been the work of an underground Zionist organization, most of the world believed reports that Arab terrorism had motivated the flight of the Iraqi Jews whom the Zionists had "rescued" really just in order to increase Israel's Jewish population. ([6])

Eveland doesn't detail the evidence linking the Zionists to the attacks, but in my book I do. In 1955, for example, I organized in Israel a panel of Jewish attorneys of Iraqi origin to handle claims of Iraqi Jews who still had property in Iraq. One well~-known attorney, who asked that I not give his name, confided in me that the laboratory tests in Iraq had confirmed that the anti- American leaflets found at the American Cultural Center bombing were typed on the same typewriter and duplicated on the same stenciling machine as the leaflets distributed by the Zionist movement just before the April 8th bombing.

Tests also showed that the type of explosive used in the Beit-Lawi attack matched traces of explosives found in the suitcase of an Iraqi Jew by the name of Yosef Basri. Basri, a lawyer, together with Shalom Salih, a shoemaker, would be put on trial for the attacks in December 1951 and executed the following month. Both men were members of Hashura, the military arm of the Zionist underground.

Salih ultimately confessed that he, Basri and a third man, Yosef Habaza, carried out the attacks.

By the time of the executions in January 1952, all but 6,000 of an estimated 125,000 Iraqi Jews had fled to Israel.. Moreover, the pro-British, pro-Zionist puppet el-Said saw to it that all of their possessions were frozen, including their cash assets. (There were ways of getting Iraqi Dinars out, but when the immigrants went to exchange them in Israel they found that the Israeli government kept 50 percent of the value.) Even those Iraqi Jews who had not registered to emigrate, but who happened to be abroad, faced loss of their nationality if they didn't return within a specified time.

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[6] / *Ropes of Sand: America's Failure in the Middle East,* by Wilbur Crane Eveland. NY; Norton, 1980, pp. 48-49.

An ancient, cultured, prosperous community had been uprooted and its people transplanted to a land dominated by East European Jews, whose culture was not only foreign but entirely hateful to them.

The Ultimate Criminals

Zionist Leaders.

From the start they knew that in order to establish a Jewish state they had to expel the indigenous Palestinian population to the neighboring Islamic states and import Jews from these same states.

Theodore Herzl, the architect of Zionism, thought it could be done by social engineering. In his diary entry for 12 June 1885, he wrote that Zionist settlers would have to "spirit the penniless population across the border by procuring employment for it in the transit countries, while denying it any employment in our own country." ([7])

Vladimir Jabotinsky, Prime Minister Netanyahu's ideological progenitor, frankly admitted that such a transfer of populations could only be brought about by force.

David Ben-Gurion, Israel's first prime minister, told a Zionist Conference in 1937 that any proposed Jewish state would have to "transfer Arab populations out of the area, if possible of their own free will, if not by coercion."([8]) After 750,000 Palestinians were uprooted and their lands confiscated in 1948-49, BenGurion had to look to the Islamic countries for Jews who could fill the resultant cheap labor market. "Emissaries" were smuggled into these countries to "convince" Jews to leave either by trickery or fear.

In the case of Iraq, both methods were used: uneducated Jews were told of a Messianic Israel in which the blind see, the lame walk, and onions grow as big as melons; educated Jews had bombs thrown at them.

A few years after the bombings, in the early 1950s, a book was published in Iraq, in Arabic, titled *Venom of the Zionist Viper*. The author was one of the Iraqi investigators of the 1950-51 bombings. In his book, he implicates the Israelis, specifically one of the emissaries sent by Israel, Mordechai Ben-Porat. As soon as the book came out, all copies disappeared, even from libraries. The word was that agents of the Israeli Mossad, working through the U.S. Embassy, bought up all the books and destroyed them. I tried on three different occasions to have one sent to me in Israel, but each time Israeli censors in the post office intercepted it.

British Leaders.

Britain always acted in its best colonial interests. For that reason Foreign Minister Arthur Balfour sent his famous 1917 letter to Lord Rothschild in exchange for Zionist support in WW I. During WW II the British were primarily concerned with keeping their client states in the Western camp, while Zionists were most concerned with the immigration of European Jews to Palestine, even if this meant cooperating with the Nazis.

After WW II the international chessboard pitted communists against capitalists. In many countries, including the United States and Iraq, Jews represented a large part of the Communist party. In Iraq, hundreds of Jews of the working intelligentsia occupied key positions in the hierarchy of the Communist and Socialist parties.

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[7] / *The Complete Diaries*, by Theodore Herzl. NY: Herzl Press & Thomas Yoncloff. 1960, vol. 1, p. 88.
[8] / Report of the Congress of the World Council of Paole Zion, Zurich, July 29,- August 7, 1937, pp. 73-74.

To keep their client countries in the capitalist camp, Britain had to make sure these governments had proBritish leaders. And if, as in Iraq, these leaders were overthrown, then an anti-Jewish riot or two could prove a useful pretext to invade the capital and reinstate the "right" leaders.

Moreover, if the possibility existed of removing the communist influence from Iraq by transferring the whole Jewish community to Israel, well then, why not? Particularly if the leaders of Israel and Iraq conspired in the deed.

The Iraqi Leaders.

Both the regent Abd al-Ilah and his Prime Minister Nouri el-Said took directions from London. Toward the end of 1948, el-Said, who had already met with Israel's Prime Minister Ben-Gurion in Vienna, began discussing with his Iraqi and British associates the need for an exchange of populations. Iraq would send the Jews in military trucks to Israel via Jordan, and Iraq would take in some of the Palestinians Israel had been evicting. His proposal included mutual confiscation of property. London nixed the idea as too radical.

EI-Said then went to his back-up plan and began to create the conditions that would make the lives of Iraqi Jews so miserable they would leave for Israel. Jewish government employees were fired from their jobs; Jewish merchants were denied import/export licenses; police began to arrest Jews for trivial reasons. Still the Jews did not leave in any great numbers.

In September, 1949, Israel sent the spy Mordechai Ben-Porat, the one mentioned in *Venom of the Zionist Viper*, to Iraq. One of the first things Ben-Porat did was to approach el-Said and promise him financial incentives to have a law enacted that would lift the citizenship of Iraqi Jews.

Soon after, Zionist and Iraqi representatives began formulating a rough draft of the bill, according to the model dictated by Israel through its agents in Baghdad. The bill was passed by the Iraqi parliament in March 1950. It empowered the government to issue one-time exit visas to Jews wishing to leave the country. In March, the bombings began.

Sixteen years later, the Israeli magazine *Haolam Hazeh*, published by Uri Avnery, then a Knesset member, accused Ben-Porat of the Baghdad bombings. Ben-Porat, who would become a Knesset member himself, denied the charge, but never sued the magazine for libel. And Iraqi Jews in Israel still call him Morad Abu al-Knabel, Mordechai of the Bombs.

As I said, all this went well beyond the comprehension of a teenager. I knew Jews were being killed and an organization existed that could lead us to the Promised Land. So I helped in the exodus to Israel. Later, on occasions, I would bump into some of these Iraqi Jews in Israel. Not infrequently they'd express the sentiment that they could kill me for what I had done.

Opportunities for Peace

After the Israeli attack on the Jordanian village of Qibya in October, 1953, Ben-Gurion went into voluntary exile at the Sedeh Boker kibbutz in the Negev. The Labor party then used to organize many buses for people to visit him there, where they would see the former Prime Minister working with sheep. But that was only for show. Really he was writing his diary and continuing to be active behind the scenes. I went on such a tour.

We were told not to try to speak to Ben-Gurion, but when I saw him, I asked why, since Israel is a democracy with a parliament, does it not have

a constitution? Ben-Gurion said, "Look, boy" – I was 24 at the time – "if we have a constitution, we have to write in it the border of our country. And this is not our border, my dear."

I asked, "Then where is the border?" He said, "Wherever the Tsahal will come, this is the border." Tsahal is the Israeli army.

Ben-Gurion told the world that Israel accepted the partition and the Arabs rejected it. Then Israel took half of the land that was promised to the Arab state. And still he was saying it was not enough. Israel needed more land. How can a country make peace with its neighbors if it wants to take their land? How can a country demand to be secure if it won't say what borders it will be satisfied with? For such a country, peace would be an inconvenience.

I know now that from the beginning many Arab leaders wanted to make peace with Israel, but Israel always refused. Ben-Gurion covered this up with propaganda. He said the Arabs wanted to drive Israel into the sea and he called Gamal Abdel Nasser the Hitler of the Middle East whose foremost intent was to destroy Israel. He wanted America and Great Britain to treat Nasser like a pariah.

In 1954, it seemed that America was getting less critical of Nasser.

Then during a three-week period in July, several terrorist bombs were set off at the United States Information Agency offices in Cairo and Alexandria, a British-owned theater, and the central post office in Cairo. An attempt to firebomb a cinema in Alexandria failed when the bomb went off in the pocket of one of the perpetrators. That led to the discovery that the terrorists were not anti- Western Egyptians, but were instead Israeli spies bent on souring the warming relationship between Egypt and the United States in what came to be known as the Lavon Affair.

Ben-Gurion was still living on his kibbutz. Moshe Sharett as Prime Minister was in contact with Abdel Nasser through the offices of Lord Maurice Orbach of Great Britain. Sharett asked Nasser to be lenient with the captured spies, and Nasser did all that was in his power to prevent a deterioration of the situation between the two countries.

Then Ben-Gurion returned as Defense Minister in February, 1955.

Later that month Israeli troops attacked Egyptian military camps and Palestinian refugees in Gaza, killing 54 and injuring many more. The very night of the attack, Lord Orbach was on his way to deliver a message to Nasser, but was unable to get through because of the military action. When Orbach telephoned, Nasser's secretary told him the attack proved that Israel did not want peace and he was wasting his time as a mediator.

In November, Ben-Gurion announced in the Knesset that he was willing to meet with Abdel Nasser anywhere and at any time for the sake of peace and understanding. The next morning the Israeli military attacked an Egyptian military camp in the Sabaha region.

Although Nasser felt pessimistic about achieving peace with Israel, he continued to send other mediators to try. One was through the American Friends Service Committee; another via the Prime Minister of Malta, Dom Minthoff; and still another through Marshall Tito of Yugoslavia.

One that looked particularly promising was through Dennis Hamilton, editor of *The London Times*. Nasser told Hamilton that if only he could sit and talk with Ben-Gurion for two or three hours, they would be able to settle the conflict and end the state of war between the two countries. When word of this reached BenGurion, he arranged to meet with Hamilton. They decided to pursue the matter with the Israeli ambassador in London, Arthur Luria, as liaison. On Hamilton's third trip to Egypt, Nasser met him with the text of a Ben-Gurion speech stating that Israel would not give up an inch of land and would not take back a single refugee. Hamilton knew

that Ben-Gurion had undermined a peace mission and missed an opportunity to settle the Israeli-Arab conflict.

Nasser even sent his friend Ibrahim Izat of the *Ruz El Yusuf* weekly paper to meet with Israeli leaders in order to explore the political atmosphere and find out why the attacks were taking place if Israel really wanted peace. One of the men Izat met with was Yigal Yadin, a former Chief of Staff of the army who wrote this letter to me on January 14,1982:

> Dear Mr. Giladi:
>
> Your letter reminded me of an event which I nearly forgot and of which I remember only a few details.
>
> Ibrahim Izat came to me if I am not mistaken under the request of the Foreign Ministry or one of its branches; he stayed in my house and we spoke for many hours. I do not remember him saying that he came on a mission from Nasser, but I have no doubt that he let it be understood that this was with his knowledge or acquiescence ...

When Nasser decided to nationalize the Suez Canal in spite of opposition from the British and the French, Radio Cairo announced in Hebrew:

> If the Israeli government is not influenced by the British and the French imperialists, it will eventually result in greater understanding between the two states, and Egypt will reconsider Israel's request to have access to the Suez Canal.

Israel responded that it had no designs on Egypt, but at that very moment Israeli representatives were in France planning the three-way attack that was to take place in October, 1956.

All the while, Ben-Gurion continued to talk about the Hitler of the Middle East. This brainwashing went on until late September, 1970, when Gamal Abdel Nasser passed away.'Then, miracle of miracles, David Ben-Gurion told the press: "A week before he died I received an envoy from Abdel Nasser who asked to meet with me urgently in order to solve the problems between Israel and the Arab world."

The public was surprised because they didn't know that Abdel Nasser had wanted this all along, but Israel had sabotaged it.

Nasser was not the only Arab leader who wanted to make peace with Israel. There were many others.

Brigadier General Abdel Karim Qasem, before he seized power in Iraq in July, 1958, headed an underground organization that sent a delegation to Israel to make a secret agreement. Ben-Gurion refused even to see him. I learned about this when I was a journalist in Israel. But whenever I tried to publish even a small part of it, the censor would stamp it "Not Allowed."

Now, in Netanyahu, we are witnessing another attempt by an Israeli Prime Minister to fake an interest in making peace. Netanyahu and the Likud are setting up Arafat by demanding that he institute increasingly more repressive measures in the interest of Israeli "security."

Sooner or later I suspect the Palestinians will have had enough of Arafat's strong-arm methods as Israel's quisling-and he'll be killed. Then the Israeli government will say, "See, we were ready to give him everything. You can't trust those Arabs-they kill each other. Now there's no one to even talk to about peace."

Conclusion

Alexis de Tocqueville once observed that it is easier for the world to accept a simple lie than a complex truth. Certainly it has been easier for the world to accept the Zionist lie that Jews were evicted from Muslim lands because of anti-Semitism, and that Israelis, never the Arabs, were the pursuers of peace. The truth is far more discerning: bigger players on the world stage were pulling the strings.

These players, I believe, should be held accountable for their crimes, particularly when they willfully terrorized, dispossessed and killed innocent people on the altar of some ideological imperative.

I believe, too, that the descendants of these leaders have a moral responsibility to compensate the victims and their descendants, and to do so not just with reparations, but by setting the historical record straight.

That is why I established a panel of inquiry in Israel to seek reparations for Iraqi Jews who had been forced to leave behind their property and possessions in Iraq. That is why I joined the Black Panthers in confronting the Israeli government with the grievances of the Jews in Israel who came from Islamic lands. And that is why I have written my book: to set the historical record straight.

We Jews from Islamic lands did not leave our ancestral homes because of any natural enmity between Jews and Muslims. And we Arabs – I say Arabs because that is the language my wife and I still speak at home – we Arabs on numerous occasions have sought peace with the State of the Jews. And finally, as a U.S. citizen and taxpayer, let me say that we Americans need to stop supporting racial discrimination in Israel and the cruel expropriation of lands in the West Bank, Gaza, South Lebanon and the Golan Heights.

TWO

David Ben-Gurion

David Ben-Gurion was born in Plonsk (then Russian Poland). His father was a fervent Zionist and his home was the center of Zionist activity. As a young man he traveled throughout Poland speaking on behalf of the Po'alei Zion movement. In September 1906 he settled in Palestine. He was elected to the central committee of Po'alei Zion and in October 1906 took part in a conference at Ramleh which formulated the party's first platform in a distinct Marxist spirit in accordance with Ber Borochov's teachings.

His early years were spent formulating the basics of what he considered to be important aspects of Zionism. Hebrew was to be the official language, and in settling the land, they would organize as a political force that would strive for Jewish autonomy in Palestine.

In 1911, Ben-Gurion went to study in Turkey. When World War I broke out, he and his party favored loyalty to Turkey and adoption of Ottoman citizenship. However, with the advent of persecutions by the Turkish administration he was arrested and accused of conspiring against the Ottoman rule in order to establish a Jewish state.

In 1915, Ben-Gurion proceeded to New York to establish the Ha-Halutz, an organization to prepare young boys for settlement in Palestine after the war. After the Balfour Declaration, Ben-Gurion called for the formation of Jewish battalions to liberate Palestine. He volunteered for the British army and became a soldier in the Jewish Legion. There he met volunteers from the labor movement in Palestine and began to prepare for Jewish mass immigration and settlement for the time when it was liberated from Ottoman rule.

In 1919, at the 13th conference of Po'alei Zion in Palestine, Ben-Gurion called for a plan to unite Jewish workers in Palestine and abroad to form a political force to direct a Zionist movement toward the establishment of a socialist society based upon the collectivist principle embodied in the Kibbutz movement.

The years from 1920 to 1934 were spent developing relations that would establish the Labor Party as the dominant one. There was resistance to the right-wing organization of Vladimir Jabotinsky (Revisionist movement). In an attempt to prevent a split in the Zionist movement, he reached a tentative agreement with Jabotinsky. This agreement was rejected by members of the Histradrut, which Ben-Gurion regarded as a "grave error."

Ben-Gurion, as Chairman of the Jewish Agency Executive, from 1935 to 1948, together with Chaim Weizmann, directed all Zionist affairs. The proposal to partition Palestine into an Arab and a Jewish state in June of 1937 was accepted by Ben-Gurion in the belief that even a small Jewish

state would be a powerful instrument for the realization of Zionism. His position was shared by Weizmann and Moshe Sharett, but many of his closest colleagues were among its opponents. When the British government abandoned the partition plan, Ben-Gurion participated in political negotiations held by the British in London with Jews and Arabs separately (the "Round Table" talks), which ended in 1939 with the publication of the White Paper of 1939. Ben-Gurion called for active resistance to its implementation and proposed the intensification of "illegal" immigration involving incidents with British coastal guards and settlement of land in areas prohibited to Jews.

At the outbreak of World War II, BenrGurion said they should assist the British but with the implementation of the Land Transfer Regulations in February 1940, he launched a strong protest movement. The protest ended when Italy entered the war, opening a second front against the British in the Mediterranean. Ben-Gurion then set out on a political propaganda campaign mainly in the United States. In May 1942 he headed the group that drew up the Biltmore Program which called for a new political program and the opening of Palestine to Jewish immigration and settlement. When dissident underground organizations Irgun Zvai Leumi (IZL) and Lohamei Herut Israel (Lehi) organized armed attacks against the British government in Palestine toward the end of the war, Ben-Gurion ordered the yishuv institutions and the Haganah to take vigorous measures to curb them. He even went so far as to cooperate with the British authorities to apprehend members of the dissident organizations-a step which aroused much controversy in the ranks of the Haganah.

After World War II, when Britain had no intention of abandoning the White Paper policy, Ben-Gurion led the political struggle against the British and authorized the sabotage activities of the Hebrew Resistance movement (Ten'uat ha-Meri ha-lvri) which comprised the Haganah, IZI and Lehi. In the months immediately following the war he ordered the Haganah leaders to begin acquiring large quantities of arms in preparation for the contingency of an armed clash with the Arabs.

Ben-Gurion was in Europe in June of 1946 when members of the Jewish Agency Executive were arrested by the British. He opposed the moderate elements in the Zionist movement that favored an attempt to reach a compromise with the British. But he did give the order to halt the armed struggle in Palestine. His Policy was approved at the 22nd Zionist Congress (December 1946) when Weizmann failed to be reelected as president of the World Zionist Organization. Ben-Gurion was re-elected as chairman of the Jewish Agency Executive and was also given the defense portfolio. He spent the remainder of the time between 1946 and the war of independence in December 1947 strengthening the Haganah for effective resistance.

Ben-Gurion was also one of the chief Zionist spokesmen before the Anglo American Enquiry Commission and the UN Special Commission of Palestine (UNSCOP). During the course of the war he structured the Israeli Army which was officially formed in May 1948. He had to decide between two systems in the Haganah, represented mainly by the commanders of the Palmach and veterans of the British Army. He also had to deal with the activities of the dissident organization that was finally liquidated in the summer of 1948 after the Altalena (See Irgun Zvai Leumi) episode and the murder of Count Bernadotte. Ben-Gurion ordered the disbanding of the Palmach units in the general framework of the army. This factor was a decisive one which determined the borders of the state: the conquest of the northern Negev (October 1948), the retreat from Sinai (January 1949) and the occupation of Eilat (March 1949).

On May 14, 1948 Ben-Gurion proclaimed the establishment of the State of Israel. He became Prime Minister and Defense Minister in the provisional government continuing in these posts after the election to the first Knesset in 1949. As no single party obtained a majority, he formed a coalition government which set the pattern for future governments. In December 1949 he declared Jerusalem the capital of Israel.

In the following years, Ben-Gurion devoted most of his efforts to strengthening the army and establishing civilian control over it. He was a formative influence on the emergent character of the state of Israel.

In December 1953 Ben-Gurion announced his resignation from the government. He joined the new non-party Kibbutz Sedeh Boker in the heart of the Negev.

In February 1955, following the collapse of an Israeli intelligence network in Egypt, Defense Minister Pinhas Lavon resigned and Ben-Gurion was recalled to serve as Minister of Defense for the government headed by Moshe Sharett. With terrorist activity within her borders, Ben-Gurion decided upon systematic reprisal actions beyond the armistice lines. After the elections of November 1955, he again assumed the twofold functions of Prime Minister and Minister of Defense. He established close relations with France and these ties became closer when Nasser antagonized the western powers by nationalizing the Suez Canal in July of 1956. In October 1956 Ben-Gurion went to France for a secret meeting with representatives of the French and British governments at which time a concerted military action against Egypt was planned.

On October 29, 1956 the Israeli Army moved into the Sinai Peninsula and within a week the military objectives had been achieved. Ben-Gurion withdrew the forces of the Israeli arms from Sinai and the Gaza Strip as a result of heavy international pressure, especially from the United States and the Soviet Union.

After the Sinai campaign Ben-Gurion's efforts were directed to consolidating Israel's international position. His policy of obtaining economic and military aid from West Germany aroused public controversy. During his election campaign at the end of 1959 the main issue was electoral reform to solve Israel's political ills. The elections produced no significant change in the composition of the Knesset and has remained in place to the present date.

In the following two years, Ben-Gurion traveled to the United States, Western Europe and the Far East. In September 1960 the government was shaken by the "Lavon Affair." Suspicions arose concerning the authenticity of certain documents that had been brought before the government six years earlier which had attributed the responsibility for the failure of Israel intelligence in Egypt to Pinhas Lavon, then Minister of Defense. Lavon demanded that his name be cleared and a commission of seven ministers who examined the relevant documents acquitted him of any responsibility in the affair.

Ben-Gurion refused to accept this verdict. He submitted his resignation in January 1961 and requested that his party choose between himself and Lavon. After considerable controversy the central committee of Mapai decided by a 60% majority to dismiss Lavon from his office as Secretary-General of the Histadrut. Mapai received fewer votes in the elections of August 1961 and it was with great difficulty that Ben-Gurion succeeded in forming a new coalition government.

In June of 1963 Ben-Gurion again resigned from the government, recommending Levi Eshkol as his successor. He again retired to Sedeh Boker and started writing the history of the birth of Israel. But in the spring of 1964, he returned to the public arena by once more raising the question

of the "Lavon Affair" and demanding a judicial inquiry. He renewed his advocacy of a change in the electoral system, expressed his opposition to the alignment between Mapai and Ahdut ha-Avodah, and attacked Levi Eshkol and other members of the government.

In January 1965, Mapai decided against Ben-Gurion by a majority of 60%. As a result, Ben-Gurion organized his followers in an independent list for the 1965 elections to the Histadrut and the Knesset, the Israeli Workers List (Reshimat Po'alei Israel or Rafi), thus seceding from Mapai. He was joined by Moshe Dayan and Shimon Peres which was a disappointment to Ben-Gurion's supporters. Rafi rejoined the government on the eve of the Six Day War (June 1967) and shortly after the war, joined with Mapai and Ahdut haAvodah to form the reunited Israel Labor Party (Miflegat ha-Avodah). Ben-Gurion did not participate and did not join the new party. He continued his demand for a renewed inquiry into the "Lavon Affair".

Ben-Gurion remained a solitary figure whose preeminent and single-minded role in the establishment and building of the state assured him a unique position in public life and in the affection of the people.

In the October of 1969 elections to the Knesset, Ben-Gurion and a group of his followers received four mandates, retaining a strong oppositional attitude toward the alignment of the Israel Labor Party and Mapam. Ben-Gurion resigned from the Knesset the following year.

Ben-Gurion's personality embodied great spiritual forces and tremendous will power. As an orator, publicist and forceful debater, he strove to strengthen both the labor movement in Israel and the Zionist movement; also to organize institutions designed to advance their objectives.

His intellectual interests were wide, embracing not only a thorough study of the Bible but also Greek philosophy, Buddhism and the philosophy of Spinoza. From his youth he insisted that Zionism could be realized only by personal presence in Eretz Israel. After the founding of the state, he bitterly attacked the Zionists who remained in the Diaspora. Both admirers and opponents, Jews and non-Jews have regarded Ben-Gurion as foremost among the founding fathers of modern Israel.

The foregoing is a summary of the public biography of David Ben-Gurion. However, there are many parts that to date remain secret and have never been published.

David Ben-Gurion (né Green) was a historical figure for the Israeli people and the World Zionist Organization. During Ben-Gurion's term as Secretary or Chairman of the Zionist Organization or as Israeli Prime Minister and Defense Minister, many positive actions were taken- as were other actions that caused great harm to the State and people of Israel.

Ben-Gurion was a controversial figure throughout his life. His admirers note his prominent role in the forming of the IDF and the establishment of the State of Israel. Others hold him responsible for some of the regional isolation of the State as well as many actions which were harmful to the Jews and to the Israeli people, some of which have not been rectified to this day.

It is not for me to present the positive actions he took or ordered to be taken. My job as a critic is to expose the negative deeds he carried out or ordered to be carried out. There is a long list, and I will attempt to note here the most important ones:

1. Favoring the transfer agreement between the Zionist Organization and the government of Nazi Germany and selling German goods despite the decision by world Jews to boycott these goods.

2. With Ben-Gurion's knowledge and permission, Eichmann was invited for talks in Palestine and Egypt with representatives of the Jewish Agency. Moreover, Ben-Gurion instructed the Jewish Agency to prolong the contact with Eichmann until 1940.

3. The bombing of *Patria* and *Struma* immigrant ships and the cynical use of the deaths of hundreds of Jews for questionable political purposes.

4. Concealing and covering up information about German atrocities against European Jews.

5. The continued bombing of ships, namely a large ship called the *Empire Life Guard*.

6. Choosing to enter into a secret agreement with King Abdallah in preference to the partition of Palestine, the expulsion of most Palestinians and creating a scorched earth policy with most of the Arab world.

7. Acts of sabotage in Iraq against Jewish institutions in order to spur them to immigrate to Israel.

8. Cleansing the Nazi abomination by signing the reparations agreement and creating a split in the Jewish community, particularly in Israel.

9. Using the army for hostilities against the Palestinian Arab villages inside Israel, such as the Qibah operation so as to thwart the water sharing agreement between Israel and the Arab States (Jordan, Syria and Israel under the Johnston agreement-Johnston was Eisenhower's envoy).

10. Acts of sabotage in the heart of Egypt.

11. Collaborating with foreign powers (Britain and France) and starting a war against Egypt (the Sinai war) which led to the conflict with the Arab world.

12. Launching a Shavit-2 rocket for the sake of elections and introducing into the region an arms race for sophisticated and deadly weaponry.

13. Setting up nuclear reactors for military purposes, initiating a mad race for nuclear, bacteriological and chemical weapons.

14. Blowing up a small motorized ship carrying 42 Jews from Morocco, most of whom were children, for dubious political ends.

15. During the Saver meeting in France (just before the Sinai war), October 19, 1956, Ben-Gurion met with the French delegation. As the talks went on, Ben-Gurion presented to the participants a plan which

> was astonishing. The plan called for the assassination of Gamal Abd Nasser, the then Egyptian President, and division of Jordan between Iraq and Israel. In return, Iraq would admit the Palestinian refugees and Israel would take the territory of Lebanon from the Sultan border to the Litani River. *(Yediot Aharonot,* April 3, 1987)

For lack of space in this book I selected a number of actions from this long list, that are completely unknown to most readers. The others have been publicized in the media.

Ben-Gurion refused to accept the delegation of the underground organization from Iraq that was under the leadership of Brigadier General Abdel Karim Qasem who became President July 14, 1958.

Ben-Gurion refused the proposal of Ralph Bunche, the United Nations mediator, to meet Hosni AI-Zaim, the President of Syria, who was ready to negotiate for peace. Instead of encouraging the Arabs of Israel to become the essential link in the peace process between Israel and the Arab world, Ben-Gurion subjected them to military rule which limited their freedom of mobility within the State of Israel itself. In addition, he submitted them to emergency laws which included arrest and interrogation without due process. These laws are in effect as of this date.

Israel enjoys a democratic voting system. However, Israel is a country without a written constitution. A constitution guarantees the rights of all its citizens. Therefore, the absence of a constitution from the governmental structure of the State of Israel permits it to avoid the issue of granting equal rights to all parts of its population.

In 1967 when Tom Segev was interviewing David Ben-Gurion and he asked what he understood about the Holocaust, he didn't answer the first two times he was questioned. On third inquiry Ben-Gurion said: "What is there to understand? They die and finish."

(Tom Segev wrote in his book, *The Seventh Million,* that he found in his research that David Ben-Gurion – a Zionist leader – looked upon the Jews who were not in the State of Israel as unnecessary and they did not need them.)

Under the leadership and management of David Ben-Gurion, the World Zionist Organization ignored the existence of the Jewish communities of the Islamic countries. He thought about them only after he threw 750,000 Palestinian-Arabs off their land that he then appropriated. At that point he realized he needed cheap labor, but even when the Jews of Islamic countries came, Ben-Gurion kept them in tents and used them for propaganda purposes to extract money from the rich Jews. Ben-Gurion made racist statements, referring to these refugees as *"Avaki-Adam"* in Hebrew – "less than human," or "sub-human."

This was the basis of the relationship between the Ashkenazi Jews and the Jews from Islamic countries. The same treatment persists today; Jews of Islamic countries are considered second-class citizens.

Following are the basic tenets of the proposal of the National Military Organization (Irgun Zvai Leumi) concerning the solution of the Jewish question in Europe and the participation of the NMO in the war on the side of Germany:

> It is often stated in the speeches and utterances of the leading statesmen of National Socialist Germany that a New Order in Europe requires as a prerequisite the radical solution of the Jewish question through evacuation. *(Jew-Free Europe)*

The evacuation of the Jewish masses from Europe is a precondition for solving the Jewish question; but this can only be made possible and complete through the settlement of those masses in the home of the Jewish people, Palestine, and through the establishment of a Jewish state in its historical boundaries.

The solving in this manner of the Jewish problem, thus bringing about the liberation of Jewish people once and for all, is the objective of the political activity and the years-long struggle of the Jewish freedom movement: the National Military Organization (Irgun Zvai Leumi) in Palestine.

The document was written in late 1940, when Avraham Stern still called his movement the "real" Irgun, from which they had split earlier in the year. Later, the Sterns took the name Lohamei Herut Yisrael (Lehi for short), or Fighters for the Freedom of Israel. They were, however, universally known by the name the British gave them: the Stern gang.

The NMO, which is well acquainted with the good will of the German Reich government and its authorities towards Zionist activity inside Germany and towards emigration plans, is of the opinion that:

1. Common interests could exist between the establishment of a new order in Europe in conformity with the German concept, and the true national aspirations of the Jewish people as they are embodied by the NMO.
2. Cooperation between the new German and a renewed folkish national Hebraium would be possible, and
3. The establishment of the historical Jewish state on a national and total-itarian basis, and bound by a treaty with the German Reich, would be in the interest of a maintained and strengthened future German position of power in the Near East.

Proceeding from these considerations, the NMO in Palestine, under the condition of the above-mentioned national aspiration of the Israeli Freedom Movement that is recognized on the side of the German Reich, offers to actively take part in the war on Germany's side.

This offer by the NMO, covering activity in the military, political and information fields, in Palestine and, according to our determined preparations, outside Palestine, would be connected to the military training and organizing of the Jewish manpower in Europe under the leadership and command of the NMO. These military units would take part in the fight to conquer Palestine, should such a front be decided upon.

The indirect participation of the Israeli Freedom Movement in the new order in Europe, already in the preparatory stage, would be linked with a positive radical solution of the European Jewish problem in conformity with the above mentioned national aspirations of the Jewish people. This would extraordinarily strengthen the moral basis of the new order in the eyes of all humanity.

The cooperation of the Israeli Freedom Movement would also be along the lines of one of the last speeches of the German Reich Chancellor, in which Hitler emphasized that he would utilize every combination and coalition in order to isolate and defeat England.

A brief general view of the formation, essence, and activity of the NMO in Palestine.

The NMO developed partly out of the Jewish Self Defense in Palestine and the Revisionist movement (New Zionist Organization), with which the NMO was loosely associated through the person of Mr. V. Jabotinsky until his death.

The pro-English attitude of the Revisionist Organization in Palestine ' which prevented the renewal of the personal union, led in the fall of this year to a complete break between it and the NMO, as well as to a split in the Revisionist movement.

The goal of the NMO is the establishment of the Jewish State within its historical borders.

The NMO in contrast to all Zionist trends, rejects colonizatory infiltration as the only means of making accessible and gradually taking possession of the father land, and practices its slogan, the struggle and the sacrifice, as the only true means for conquest of Palestine.

On account of its militant character and its antiEnglish disposition, the NMO is forced, under constant persecutions by the English administration, to exercise its political activity and the military training of its members in Palestine in secret.

The NMO whose terrorist activities began as early as the fall of the year 1936, after the publication of the English White Papers, became especially prominent in the summer of 1939 through successful intensification of its terrorist activity and sabotage of English property. This activity as well as daily secret radio messages, were at that time noticed and discussed by almost the entire world.

The NMO maintained independent political offices in Warsaw, Paris, London, and New York until the beginning of the war.

The office in Warsaw was mainly concerned with the military organization and training of the national Zionist youth. It was closely connected with the Jewish masses, who especially in Poland enthusiastically carried on, and supported in every manner, the fight of the NMO in Palestine. Two newspapers were published in Warsaw: *The Deed* and *Liberated Jerusalem;* these were organs of the NMO.

The office in Warsaw maintained close relations to the former Polish government and those military circles, who brought greatest sympathy and understanding toward the aims of the NMO. Thus in the year 1939 selected groups of NMO members were sent from Palestine to Poland where their military training was completed in barracks by Polish officers.

The NMO is closely related to the totalitarian movements of Europe in its ideology and structure.

The fighting capacity of the NMO could never be paralyzed or seriously weakened: neither through strong defensive measures by English administration and the Arabs nor by those of the Jewish socialists.

David Yisraeli, Ph. D, *The Palestine Problem in German Politics, 1889-1945.* Ramat Gan, Israel: Bar Ilan University, 1974.

How Documents Were Found

In April 1945 the British found in Germany some 300 tons of files in the Foreign Ministry archives. All materials were sent to London where they were examined. Apparently the British copied what was desirable, and in particular the material that was needed to complete the charges against the war criminals at the Nuremberg trials.

In the year 1955 the British Foreign Office decided to return the above material to Germany, since by then Western Germany had been established and had ties (including military) with the West. Moshe Sharett learned about the existence of this material and asked the British to allow an Israeli researcher to look at the material, sort it out, make copies of microfilms and pass them on to Israel. The British did not object.

In 1959 when the Israeli government decided to capture Adolf Eichmann, Sharett told a small number of people about the existence of the archives. Mr. Verner David Malkior was asked to look at the material, to use it in preparing the case against Eichmann when he was brought to Israel. When Eichmann was captured all the material was transferred to the Isar camp where Department 06 was working on the charge sheet. The people from Department 06, as a matter of fact, insisted that Mr. Verner David Malkior examine the material and give them what they needed. Malkior worked on the material with a helper from Yad Vashem. The assistant found files from the year 1941, among them the document pertaining to the ties of the Irgun with the Nazi regime.

The assistant suggested to Malkor that the document be sent to Ben-Gurion, but Malkior refused, arguing that:

1. It was first necessary to check if the document was about the Irgun or the Stern Gang.
2. The document was unrelated to the Eichmann trial.

The assistant decided to consult with Moshe Sharett, but before receiving Sharett's answer, the assistant managed to make copies of the document despite explicit prohibition. He found a way to leave the security room where the two were working and he informed another man about the document who, in turn, informed Ben-Gurion. The following day the Prime Minister's office transmitted a demand to receive the document. Mr. Malkior had no choice; he had to hand over the document to the emissary from the Prime Minister's office.

Two days later two young men from the Security Services came up to Malkior and demanded the document with all the copies. They also demanded to remove from the microfilm the frames with the document; the document disappeared from the world. Who gave the order to destroy the document? No one knows. Who was interested in the disappearance of the document ? *(Haaretz* supplement, 4 March 1983)

The author of this book has the answer to these questions.

The document pertains to the Irgun which was headed by Abraham Stern (Yair) who was killed on February 12,1942 by a British officer, as well as Nathan Friedman Yelin (Gera), Yizhak Yezernitski (Shamir) (Michael), and Dr. Israel Eldad-Sheib. The only one of the four who was in a position to order the security men to remove the document was no doubt Yizhak Yezernitzki (Shamir) (Michael) since he then worked for the Mossad and was influential with many security men. It is probable that he did it.

(Note: The same Yizak Yezernitzki (Shamir) is the former Prime Minister of Israel. And as for the question, why did Ben-Gurion not use the document against Begin, Eldad-Sheib and Izhak Shamir ... Mapai was also dirty with German mud due to the Kastner trial (Kach, *Haaretz* supplement, 4 March 1983).

And now the question, how did the documents come into my hands? I received them through unidentified channels. Since no Israeli institution, including "Yad Vashem" (Holocaust museum) which knows about the

existence of these documents- – is willing to give any information about them, it is worthless exhibiting them.

Nazis and Zionists in One Boat

In the year 1985 the book, *The Third Reich and the Palestine Problem* was published in the United States by Texas University Press (319 pages, of which 118 are footnotes). The author, [Francis R. Nicosia], a history professor who appears to be a professional researcher searched all the archives of the German Foreign Ministry from the 1930s as well as the documents of the Gestapo and the S.S. and more ... The resulting book is an instructive study. In addition, the author followed the sources and to the extent possible, refrained from presenting his own opinion on the subject.

Every single detail has its source and is verified. Most of the sources are German documents from that period. The book reveals things not published thus far concerning the relationship in the 1930s between agents of the Zionist movement and representatives of the Nazi regime. The book suggests there was close cooperation between the Zionist movement and the Nazi regime between the years 1930 to 1938-39.

German Headguns for Defense

The book is fascinating and I decided to read it in its entirety without putting it down. The more I read it, the more I was surprised. The truth is, I had trouble finding this book. It simply disappeared from the bookstores. It seems that a mysterious hand had "purchased" the book from all the bookstores (as happened with the book that came out in Israel and disappeared from the bookstores).

On pages 63-64 is an account of how German weapons (300 Mauser guns) were sent to the Haganah command and concealed in concrete barrels. The shipment was loaded and sent to the address of E. Dekel, one of the Haganah commanders. Similarly, the S.S. invited the Berlin representatives of the Zionist movement to assist with the immigration of pioneering youths and prepare them for new lives in the Jewish state.

Who Is Polkas?

On many pages in the book Pabel Polkas is mentioned as the Haganah and immigration institute representative. That is indeed what he is, and this is his biography: He was born in Austria in the year 1900, was active in the Hashomer Hatzair movement in Europe and became one of the leaders of that movement there. In the year 1920 after World War I, Polkas was an officer in the Austrian army. He knew many languages, studied geopolitics and then went on to Palestine. Polkas held various jobs and was eventually hired as translator for the British mandate administration. In Palestine he promptly became attached to the Haganah and was closely in touch with the Brigadier Kisch.

Herman Kisch was a Zionist leader and member of the Zionist movement in Palestine. In 1939 he volunteered for the British military service and was appointed head engineer for the eighth British camp in the western desert, North Africa. He was then given the rank of Brigadier General. On April 11, 1943, he was killed in a battle against the Germans in Tunis. He was 55 years old when he died.

Eisar Beeri (the great Eisar Beeri, nicknamed "Big Eisar"), was one of the heads of the Haganah Organization. Beeri headed the Shin Yob Haganah Information Service.

On October 17, 1949, Beeri was put on trial for executing Officer Tubionsky. He was convicted and given a symbolic sentence. After the trial he kept to himself and later passed away.

In Palestine Polkas conferred with Reichart, the Reich agent and with the knowledge of Kish and Eisar Beeri, he left for Berlin to meet with Eichmann and Hagin. (Weekend supplement of *Maariv,* 5 August 1988)

Eichmann and the Haganah Representative In Cairo

The Reich representative spoke with Polkas and suggested to him that he go to Berlin. Polkas informed Brigadier Kish and Issar Beeri about this (according to the *Maariv* supplement of 5 August 1988) and left on his way to Germany in February 1937. In Berlin he was received by Eichmann and Hagin and another Nazi.

They discussed immigration and absorption. He was also questioned about the assassination of senior Nazis by Jewish youth movements. The author describes in his book meetings which took place between Polkas, Eichmann and Hagin, agent of the S.S. who came to Palestine (*Maariv,* 5 August 1988).

The meeting took place in Haifa where Eichmann and Hagin came by ship, but since the Mandate police learned who they were they were told to cut their stay in Palestine for this reason. They got on a ship and went on their way to Cairo.

In October 1937 the Haganah representative and the Zionist movement agent Pabel Polkas went to Cairo to meet with Eichmann and Hagin. Their meeting place was the well-known Gropi café, and they of course spoke about the "joint mutual interests" of the two peoples.

Eichmann as Observer at the Zionist Congress

The chapter which most surprised me in this book was the one describing Eichmann's mission (under orders from his superiors) to be an observer at the 20th Zionist Congress. The 20th Zionist Congress took place in the city of Zurich on August 13-16, 1937, with the participation of 484 delegates. On its agenda was a partition resolution for Palestine. In those days Nazi Germany feared the Congress might cancel the Transfer Agreement and resume the campaign for an economic boycott of Germany.

It should be noted that at the 19th Congress in Lucerne on August 10, 1935, there had been a fiery argument about the Transfer Agreement proposal – and at that time many of the delegates at the Congress were opposed to the agreement and in favor of intensifying the economic boycott against Germany. At the same Congress a delegation of German Zionists participated. They had been instructed by agents of the German government to fight every boycott proposal and to insist on upholding the terms of the Transfer Agreement. It is likely that those were the reasons why Eichmarm was sent to be an observer at the 20th Zionist Congress debates.

I heard from many of my friends who did research on the Holocaust that Eichmarm had participated at the 20th Zionist Congress (another Nazi, S.S. Mildenstein, had attended the 19th Zionist Congress that was held in Lucerne, August 10, 1935; see *The Third Reich and the Palestine Question,* p. 61). At that time I did not ask them about documentary evidence, having dismissed the matter out of hand as inconceivable, but took another look at it, in light of the disclosures in this book (p. 61). Evidence is based on NA: T-175/R588,II/112-18/1,0003 73 12 March 1937 (which was denied in the *Maariv* weekend supplement of 5 August 1988).

Who had invited Eichmann and how did he get into the Congress? Also, why was he allowed in? There are no answers in the book to these questions, but it is probable that the German Zionist delegation which was so loyal to the interests of Germany, saw to it that Eichmann would be able to attend the Congress.

Polka's Compensation

One of my friends who knew about my interest in the issue of the ties between the Zionist movement and its agents with the Nazi government before the Holocaust sent me a photocopy of the document he had found in the Gestapo archives. The document is a report by the Gestapo dated June 17,193 7 which says, inter alia:

> The Gestapo requests that Mr. Pabel Polkas be paid the sum of 1000 DM for his services to the Gestapo (the type of services Pabel rendered to the Gestapo were detailed in the body of the document), an amount which will be deducted from the transfer balance. (There had been an agreement between the Zionist executive committee and the Reich government in 1935 in regard to transferring the money of German Jews who left their country and had immigrated to Palestine. At the time the agreement was known as the Transfer Agreement.) The document also decrees the release of 600-700 people who were Haganah members and German Jews and had been imprisoned by the Gestapo.

There was also a description of the services rendered by Pabel Polkas to the Gestapo. He had given them information about the movements of a truck that was carrying an anti-Nazi radio station that belonged to the German Communist party, which had been outlawed. (The station was broadcasting information about the deeds of the Nazis, the dangers awaiting the Jews and the like) ... That station was the only one in the entire area, and it was considered very important since it was the only anti-Nazi voice in that period. The destruction of that radio station inflicted great harm on those who opposed the Nazi regime.

How Can Such Phenomena Be Explained?

I presume that Pabel Polkas (he passed away in 1985 in Israel) was acting in coordination with the leaders of the Zionist movement and the Haganah command in Palestine. One must understand the conditions in the period which preceded the Holocaust. That was the time when close ties developed between the Zionist leadership, the leaders of the Third Reich and even the S.S.Organization-since the Zionist movement was hoping to fulfill its dream to create a Jewish state. This could not have taken place without undermining the foundation of Diaspora Jewry.

Since the Nazi movement aimed at removing the Jews from Germany (and later on from all the countries of Europe) a community of interests developed. The Zionists turned (January 20) to General Smuts (a fascist South African leader) and asked him to interject in favor of the Zionist movement and have Britain make sure that in the drafting of the Sykes-Picot agreement, that the Litani River in South Lebanon as well as the sources of the Jordan River would be included in Palestine's borders. In the year 1934 the Zionists returned the favor to the Nazi General Smuts by planting a forest named after him (Richard Stevens, "Weizmann and Smuts"). The Nazis further agreed to transfer funds to Palestine and the

Zionists got in touch with anyone who would try to impose an economic boycott of Germany. The S.S. organization itself was advocating a Jewish state as the solution for the Jewish problem, a solution which "we are made to look for," in the words of the S.S. Organ, *Das Schwarze Korps,* 24 November, 1938.

Talking to the Nazis

In 1941 a number of Zionist leaders in Palestine came up with a proposal which was placed on the desk of Moshe Sharett, head of the political department. The proposal said it was necessary to go to South Africa and hold talks there with the Germans (Nazis) explaining the substance of the Jews in Palestine.

A Condolence Telegram to Adolph Hitler

The Zionist movement sent a condolence telegram to Adolph Hitler on the occasion of the death of Von Hindenburg. *(The Seventh Million,* by Tom Segev, " Seven Days, " *Yediot Aharonot,* 20 September 1991)

The View of the Zionist Leaders about the Victims of the Holocaust

"We should give up on trying to save the harmful element."

The author used the following sources:

1. *The Third Reich and the Palestine Question,* [Francis R. Nicosia].
2. The weekly *Maariv* supplement, 5 August 1988.
3. Zentrales Staat Archiv Potsdam Film No. 57981103.
4. Documents from the Gestapo Archives.
5. *The Seventh Million,* Tom Segev, *Hadashot,* 27 September 1991.
6. *Das Schwarze Korp,* 24 November, 1938.
7. *The Seventh Million,* Tom Segev, p. 63.
8. *The Seventh Million,* Tom Segev, "Seven Days," *Yediot Aharanot,* Tom Segev, "Hadashot," 27 September, 1991.
9. *Maariv,* 13 October 1989, p. 2, op-ed page.

We Did Not Know Hear ... ! We Did Not Hear... !

The news about the murder of Jews in Europe began to arrive to the outside world already when Warsaw was occupied and the Nazi army along with S.S. units conducted a pogrom of Polish Jews culminating in many massacres. But when the methodical slaughter began, there were many such reports in the press in Palestine, based on reports published overseas.

Most of the information was received from Jewish agencies, but the most up-to-date information came from the Polish government in exile, located in London.

The newspaper *Davar,* whose editor was Berl Katzenelson did everything to question the reliability of the information and at the time this newspaper would prefer information disseminated by the Nazi propaganda minister Goebbels rather than news received from Jewish agencies.

An example:

> Some of the figures about the massacre of tens of thousands published lately seemed exaggerated, and it may be that indeed they are. Thus it may be that the Nazi denial has a leg to stand on. *Davar*, 10 August 1942.

The above words are saying a great deal: don't believe what is reported in the newspapers about massacres of Jews; better believe the information disseminated by the Nazis, which is more reliable. As the news about mass murder spread and pressure upon the press grew, the leaders of the Zionist movement were unable to continue to ignore this information. On November 22, 1942, the Jewish Agency met to debate the information and decided to make this announcement:

> The Jewish Agency executive in Jerusalem has received detailed information from reliable and authoritative sources about the acts of murder and massacres committed against Jews in Poland, and against Jews from Eastern and Western Europe which were deported to Poland.
>
> According to this information, the Nazi authorities in occupied Poland began a systematic action to exterminate Jews in Polish cities and towns after the visit there of Himmler, the head of the Gestapo. A special commission was formed for the purpose of murdering Jews called Vernichtungs Commission headed by Commissar Foi. This commission traveled around Poland and took charge of the killing of Jews. Children under the age of 12 were mass murdered mercilessly, as were old people.
>
> The Jewish males who were able to work were registered and sent to unknown destinations. All contact with them was lost. In some places the Nazi authorities gathered the Jewish women and sent them as well. Eye witnesses also report that 27,000 out of the 30,000 Jews in the Kialetz ghetto were taken out some two months ago and deported. As the deportation was in progress, 1,500 people were murdered on the spot. The rumors are that the rest were murdered on the road. In Brisk Lita thousands of Jews were thrown into the Bog River and drowned by the Nazi murderers. In Piatrikov, where there were 20,000 Jews, only 2,600 are left, among them only 160 women and children. In Czestchowa there are only 2,000 left out of 40,000 Jews. In the Radom ghetto only 3,500 Jews are left out of the previous 32,500. The same thing took place in most other Jewish ghettos. In Bialistok the Nazis placed 1,500 Jews in the central synagogue and set the synagogue on fire, burning the Jews alive. Most Jews from the town of Tiktin were seized by the Nazis and buried alive.
>
> Reports from the Warsaw and Lodz ghetto tell that in recent months the Jewish population was horribly decimated. According to reports from the same sources, the mass deportation of Jews is continuing in the cities of central and Western Europe. There are now only 28,000 Jews left in Berlin.
>
> The Jewish Agency management debated these reports yesterday and decided on a number of actions and appeals overseas in connection to the Jews of Europe. A special committee was elected for the task.

Thus far the communiqué.

The reliable reports received by the Jewish agency were from British citizens who came to Palestine as part of an exchange deal starting in December 1941 through March 1945. Among them were 550 Jews.

After the Jewish Agency communiqué, many Palestine residents, and in particular activists in the Jewish Agency and Zionist Organization were enraged and complained to the leaders: "Why were you silent thus far, and why did you disregard all the information in the papers?"

The accusations turned into a major scandal in the Yishuv.

The leaders of the Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency would answer: "We did not know ... We did not know."

The accusations continued to intensify and in early December 1942 when the Histadrut Council met, a number of delegates raised the question. Eliahu Golomb, the Haganah chief said they did not know and that any information received about the massacre was received too late. This answer did not satisfy those present. One of them, Zalman Robashov (who later became the country's president in addition to being a journalist and author) spoke with excitement and asked the leaders of the Jewish Agency who were present:

> Why should anyone be astonished? Whose duty was it to be aware of the dangers awaiting the people? Who had the right to be surprised?
>
> And after all, we were warned. We were cautioned ... Luiger said it ... They said it ...
>
> The representatives of the leftist Zionist Workers party, Moshe Aram said similar things, only more emphatically.
>
> The Yishuv and the Histadrut and the activists are unwilling accomplices to murder. (*Davar*, 4 December 1942)

Robashov was right. An international institution which claims to represent the Jewish people all over the world and which aspires to fulfill the people's dreams must have known and brought it to the attention of all Jews in the world, to alert all people of the world to the crime.

Yet the organ of the Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency which was controlled by the Mapai Labor Party did all it could to minimize any reports about the murder and even questioned the reliability of the sources.

And now as for the Question: did they really not know ?

Here are a number of news items I collected from those days regarding the murder of European Jewry, starting with overseas sources:

> 1. October 22, 1941 – The Swedish paper *Social Dem* reported about a massacre of Jews committed by the Nazis. In that report the name of the officer Adolf Eichmann is mentioned as the one in charge of the killings.
>
> 2. October 22, 1941 – The sdame report was printed in the *Times*.
>
> 3. October 22, 1941 – The Jewish Telegraphic Agency (JTA) reported the the Schlimno camp, which was formerly the residence of 50,000 Jews has no more than 600 people in it. That was according to the report in the paper.
>
> 4. November 2, 1941 – The JTA correspondent filed anothe report about 52,000 Jews in Kiev.
>
> 5. October 7, 1941 – The anti-Nazi Polish command announced (Announcement No MND-750-40) that Jews were being systematically murdered and among other thinbgs listed the terms used by the Nazis in their killing of Jews, such as
>
> a. Elimination
>
> b. Extermination
>
> c. Liquidation

6. December 5, 1941 – The *Herald Tribune* carried a report about the systematic murder of Jews.

7. November 19, 1941 – There was a detailed account by the head of the British diplomatic mission in Switzerland, by Alexander Vadus, the Polish diplomatic representative in Bern. The report said that up to that point a million and-a-half Jews were murdered. (*Encounter,* p. 21, op. cit.)

8. January 2, 1942 – The *Jewish Chronicle* (a Jewish Zionist paper that is kosher and reliable) reported about the murder of Jews in the city of Rostow. The same item was carried in most British papers the very same day.

9. June 2, 1942 – The British Broadcasting Service aired a detailed report on the systematic murder of Jews under German occupation. The report quoted a 700,000 figure of victims.

10. April 1942 – The *Times* reported the murder of 120,000 Jews in Turkey.

These are the reports that came from unimpeachable overseas sources that also included the Jewish Telegraphic Agency and *The Jewish Chronicle*. Let us now see what was published in the Hebrew press in Palestine, and it is appropriate to first look at what *Davar* published – the newspaper which expressed the majority opinion in the Zionist Organization. On January 28, 1942 it was reported under the Detail column that the death rate among the Jews of Warsaw was nine times higher than among non-Jewish residents.

In July 1941 there were 3,459 deaths. The natural increase in the Jewish population is 4 times lower than among non-Jews.

Is it not obvious that the Jews were in some kind of trouble?

On January 30, 1942, there was a news item in a black box on 15 Jews who were executed.

On January 2, 1942, there was a horrible decimation of Polish Jewry. In 1941 165,000 Jews died.

On January 3, 1942, there was a report on the death of 173,000 Jews in the Lodz ghetto (from the German press).

On February 8, 1942, under the headline "Jewish Blood Being Spilled Like Water," the number of Vilna Jews dropped to as low as 40,000 from the previous 70,000.

And more:

Many were shot to death; 1,000 Jews were executed at Troki; 600 murdered in the town of Niaminchi and 200 at Eishishuk.

The same report said that Jewish war prisoners from the Red Army were murdered.

On February 9, 1942, there was a report from Kuibishev sent by the author Ehrenburg, describing an atrocity in which children, old men and women were murdered and young Jewish women were raped in Venisa, Friloki and the Odessa area.

On February 11, 1942, there was a report about the electrification of the Warsaw ghetto walls, as well as Lublin and other ghettos.

On February 19, 1942, a report about Austrian Jews being barred from buying coffee, cocoa and fruit.

On February 24, 1942, a story about deaths in Warsaw, mentioning the names of 6 Jewish women and two men who attempted to leave the ghetto without permission and were executed.

On February 24, 1942, seven were killed in Budapest.

On March 1, 1942, a report about the deportation of Jews from Transnistria, numbering tens of thousands.

On March 16, 1942, a report titled "Jewish Blood Being Spilled Like Water" which stated that the joint representative in Hungary, S.B. Jocobson who just returned to America said that according to Hungarian soldiers who

returned from the front, 240,000 Jews who had been deported from Germany and from Central Europe to the Ukraine were murdered there. The mass murder was carried out by the Gestapo. Next to this report Molotov is quoted about the Nazi massacre in the Ukraine.

On June 30, 1942, under the headline "Horror," a report said that the spokesman for the World Jewish Congress announced in New York that at least one million Jews had recently been murdered in Europe by the Nazis and at least half of this number murdered in Poland. The following day all radio stations in the United States aired the report.

On September 4, 1942, was a report about a protest rally by the Labor party in London condemning the atrocities against the Jews in Poland. Sarnuel (Arthur) Sigelboim spoke at the rally and gave a horrifying account of the extermination.

All this information appeared in *Davar* and it is my belief that Moshe Sharett, David Ben-Gurion and the rest of the Zionist leadership read *Davar!*

Haaretz

This paper printed all the information found in *Davar* but in most cases in black boxes. *Haaretz* also reported the information coming from London about the mass killings.

On July 28, 1942, was a report titled "6,000 WARSAW GHETTO JEWS EXECUTED." The report said that notices were posted on the streets about an order to deport 6,800 Jews to an unknown destination in the east and it was feared that when they got there they would be executed as was the case with the Jews deported from other Polish cities. In the vicinity of Volodimiz in eastern Poland there is a mile-long mass grave with thousands of murdered Jews.

Hatzofe

Hatzofe reported most of the news from the news agencies about the massacre of European Jews. We found the first *Hatzofe* report on March 16, 1942 (27 Adar, 5702) on the massacre carried out by the Nazis in the Ukraine (240,000 Jews murdered in the Ukraine?) but there was a question mark at the end of the headline.

Hamishikif

The March 16th *Hamashikif* had a front page headline about the massacre of Ukraine's Jews. The same headline with a black box was printed at the top of the paper.

Thus far, this is the information we were able to gather from various archives in Israel and from overseas sources about what took place in Europe.

And now we return to the statements of the Zionist leadership who claimed "we did not know."

If we go back to Hitler's intentions for European Jews which were reflected in his book, *Mein Kampf;* his statements in the victory address he delivered in Warsaw in 1939; the pogroms against Polish Jews when the country was being occupied and the information presented by the press – if after all this the Zionist leaders had the gall to say "we did not know," then the explanation for this is: they knew, but it seems that what the Nazis did

to the Jews somehow fit in with the goals of the Zionist movement. Suffice it for me to quote David Greenbaum, to be convinced that they knew, and how!

News about the killings came in non-stop. He didn't know, or he didn't want to know!

The Biltmore Conference

In early 1942 Ben-Gurion set to work organizing a Zionist conference in the United States. It can in fact be said that Ben-Gurion was among those who initiated the conference and worked to bring it about.

In early May 1942 delegations from the Zionist Organizations in the world began to arrive in New York and on the 6th of that month the conference began at the Biltmore Hotel, headed by the leaders of the Zionist movement: Chaim Weizmann, David Ben-Gurion, Dr. Nahum Goldman, Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver, Rabbi Stephen Wise and Israel Goldstein.

The main speaker at the conference was David Ben-Gurion, and the deliberations went on through May 1st in the evening when the representatives agreed on the following resolutions:

1. The American Zionists convened at this special conference to underscore their support of freedom, democracy and international justice to which the Allies are committed and which reflects their belief in the eventual victory of humanity and justice against the lawless forces of savagery.
2. The conference is sending a message of hope and support to their Jewish brethren in the ghettos and concentration camps in occupied Europe under Hitler and the participants of this conference are praying for their freedom.
3. In our era, and particularly in the past 20 years, the Jewish people awoke and grew in number in their ancient homeland from 50,000 after World War I to 500,000 at present. They farmed the barren lands and planted fruit trees and made the desert bloom. Their pioneering work in agriculture and industry is based on modern methods of cooperative settlement.
4. The conference is calling for the implementation of the main goals of the Balfour Declaration and the British Mandate (which acknowledges) the historical ties between the Jewish people and Palestine and includes an opportunity for the Jewish people to establish a Jewish commonwealth as President Wilson made clear. The conference underscored its rejection of the White Paper published in Paris in 1939 as this Paper is restricting and in fact negating the right of Jews to immigrate and live in Palestine, and as Churchill made clear to the British Parliament in May 1939 this Paper is in conflict and negates the Balfour Declaration. The White Paper policy is cruel and indefensible as it negates the inalienable rights of Jews who are escaping Nazism. At a time when Palestine has become a central point in the Allies' war effort, with each Palestinian Jew needed to assure the manpower supply for agriculture and industry, the White Paper policy) also runs counter to the Allies' war effort.
5. In the fight against the aggressive forces whose first victims were the Jews, and who are threatening the Jewish homeland, it is imperative that the right of the Jews in Palestine to take an active part in the war effort and to defend their country be recognized, in

the form of a Jewish military force which will fight under its own flag under the command of the Allies.

6. The conference states that the new world order which will follow the victory will not be founded on the principles of justice and peace for as long as the Jewish homeland problem is not solved.

The conference called for Palestine's doors to be opened and for the Jewish Agency to be allowed to handle Jewish immigration to Palestine. Powers should be granted to the Agency which would facilitate the establishment of the state and farming of empty lands, with the goal of Palestine to become a Jewish commonwealth within the new democratic world. Then and only then would the ancient injustice to the Jewish people be rectified.

These are the resolutions of the special conference that began with fanfare-with every Jew in the world waiting and hoping for at least one resolution about rescuing the Jews of Europe. The disappointment was bitter when none were forthcoming. There was not a single word about saving the Jews who were being slaughtered except of course, "THE PRAYERS OF THE CONFEREES."

There is a custom among peoples to unite against a common enemy, but that is not the way our leaders acted. Ben-Gurion, who in effect gained control of the Zionist Organization began to make things difficult for Chaim Weizmann and he took a lot of time and energy to "get" Weizmann at every opportunity.

Among other things he said about Weizmann was, "If Weizmann is only able to work by himself I shall ask him to resign." Weizmann did not keep silent and said, "If Ben-Gurion wants to supervise me then he cannot expect me to work with him."

Ben-Gurion said, "Weizmarm is acting on his own as if it were his private business ... He personally dictates things ... I have to tell him I do not consider myself bound to him."

Weizmarm said, "Ben-Gurion is suffering from psychological problems ... He is always with a chip on his shoulders, with tense nerves and he turns every meeting into ... the frenzy of a madhouse."

And Weizmann further said, "Ben-Gurion is developing fascist and megalomaniac tendencies on top of political hysteria ... a petty dictator." Stephen Wise invited the two quarreling men to his house to make peace, but to no avail. Those things were said at a time when Hitler and his colleagues massacred Jews at an average rate of 10,000 a day.

More Meetings and Not a Word about the Holocaust!

Ben-Gurion stayed in New York for a few months after the Biltmore conference. There were many reasons for this, among them, an attempt to meet with the U.S President so the latter would press Britain to cancel the White Paper. That is what was said at the time.

But many know the open secret that he was in love with the Zionist organization secretary, Miss Cohen. Eventually on October 2, 1942 and again on October 8, he held news conferences in the large hall of the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem.

He spoke in detail for an hour and answered local and foreign journalists' questions. He spoke about the United States, about American Jews, about antiSemitism in the United States and of course the Biltmore conference, the future Jewish army, Hadassah, the Magnes Group, and the proposals of Peter Bergson's (Hillel Kook) group who wanted a Jewish

government in exile. But not a single word about the slaughter of European Jews or about plans to save European refugees.

At Another Meeting

On October 15th the Zionist executive committee met and the main speaker was David Ben-Gurion. He spoke at length about a Zionist and American Jewish course of action. But this time he mentioned the Holocaust. He said, "Given the disaster suffered by Polish Jewry many Bund leaders came to the United States." That was all; not a word about the Holocaust nor about plans to rescue Europe's Jews.

On November 10th there was another session of the Zionist executive committee, which was a continuation of the previous one. Ben-Gurion took part in the debate but not a word was said about the Holocaust.

Not until November 30th, a week after the statement of the Jewish Agency about the slaughter in Europe, was there a special meeting of the delegates' assembly in Jerusalem where Ben-Gurion said:

> We do not know for certain what happened in the Nazi Valley of Death, how many Jews were already massacred or murdered or burned alive. But we do know what Hitler has in mind and what he wrote in his book, *Mein Kampf*.

He proceeded to talk about the main subject of saving the children and opening the doors of Palestine. But most of what he said was about the plans to form a Jewish army. He concluded:

> Let us say our last word to our brothers and sisters, the martyrs in the Nazi Ghettos: your calamity is our calamity, your blood is our blood. We will do all we can to avenge you and we will not let ourselves rest until we rescue you from the Nazi Inferno as well as from the degenerating diaspora; and until we bring all of you here to our country we are building and redeeming.

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From the above it is evident that Ben-Gurion knew what Hitler wrote in his book and what was planned.

Why then was no action taken? Why was there no debate on the Holocaust and no rescue operation planned and enacted at that conference called Biltmore?

The author used the following sources:

1. Shabtai Teve, Yediot Aharonot, October 24, 1986.
2. Walid Khalidi, "From Haven to Conquest," Beirut, 1972, pp. 495-96.
3. Shabtai Beit-Zvi, p. 102-3.

As for Ben-Gurion's acts of commission and omission on the Holocaust, it will suffice to read this letter attentively:

> To: The Prime Minister of Israel, Jerusalem
>
> Dear Mr. Prime Minister:
>
> The undersigned S. Beit-Zvi, lives in Tel Aviv and teaches for a living. Years ago I wrote in newspapers under the name "B. Shavivi." In recent years I was active in Maoz, an association to aid Soviet Jews. My public pursuit led

me to study extensively the rescue effort by Jews and in particular by the Zionist movement during the Holocaust in Europe (the years 1939-1945). The study involved an examination of the press and literature of that period as well as conversations with people who were able and willing to assist me.

The extensive material which I saw in the year I studied the issue led me to the conclusion that the Zionist movement and the JewishYishuv in the Land of Israel are very guilty with respect to their brethren in Europe, both by failing to do things which needed to be done in order to save them, and by doing things which greatly hurt the rescue efforts. Here are some of these acts of commission and omission: When the war broke out, rescuing Jews did not become the chief goal of the Zionist movement and of the Jewish Yishuv in Palestine. In fact this goal was not even alongside the two goals which your honor announced when the war broke out (fighting Hitler and fighting the White Paper).

Never during the Holocaust period, not even when the extent of the destruction became known and widely publicized, the rescue effort as such was not at the center of Zionist movement activity nor did it keep busy on a full time basis its main leaders (your honor, Dr. Weizmann, B. Katzenelson). At most, during the "peak" period several leaders of the Zionist movement worked on it part time and the task was handled by marginal institutions of the Movement. The Zionist Organization, which was at the time the chief Jewish force in the world and had the power to act and demobilize failed to show dedication to rescuing European Jewry. And in the absence of dedication to the rescue effort, it was doomed to fail even before it began.

Apart from what was not done, the actions which were carried out were even more serious in hampering the rescuing of Jews. During the emergency situation which developed when the war broke out, the Zionist movement continued full scale its war against "territorialism."

It declared war against any Jew who would escape Europe and find shelter in a place other than Palestine. Your honor declared at the Biltmore conference that "the meaning of these ships *(Patria* and *Strurna) is* simple-the Land of Israel or death." This statement which was rn ade as a description of objective reality was, in actuality an expression of the policy of the Zionist movement. This policy turned the British government (which in any event was not made up of saints) into Hitler's de-facto allies in murdering Europe's Jews (see the notorious statement of Lord Cranborne in the British parliament and Eden's argument against saving the Jews in Bulgaria when he met with Roosevelt). (R. Sherwood: *Roosevelt and Hopkins,* chapter 28)

As the Zionist movement was callous towards the Holocaust in Europe, it did not hesitate to exploit their catastrophe towards its own ends, and it even planned openly and publicly how it would exploit the post-war situation when the survivors would be around and their presence and plight would further the ends of Zionism. Striking examples can be found in your honor's speeches in the book *Bernaarcha (In the Struggle)* volume 3, p. 123, 134; volume 4, p. 31, 90, 102; volume 2, p. 255, 268. This hope did indeed materialize, but the small proportion which survived did so entirely no thanks to the institutions and the Yishuv in that in the critical years they rendered direct assistance to the propaganda and deception machinery of Goebbels. In September 1944, your honor announced that "the news of the Massacre in Poland reached us late, and even when it did reach us nobody wanted to believe us." Unfortunately, I found no confirmation of that statement. The truth is that for more than three years-through November 1942-Davar as well as other newspapers campaigned vehemently and systematically against "exaggerations" about the killing of Jews which reached Palestine from various sources. Your honor, if I am not mistaken, was in London (or New York) in August and September 1942 when Siegelbaum and the Polish government made public lots of reliable information about was taking place in Poland, but the news reached the Jewish Yishuv without restrictions and denials no earlier than late November. Till that time the Yishuv had been "immunized" against "horrendous propaganda" to the point that it continued to see some degree of exaggeration in all it heard, especially that now and then there were hints to

that effect in statements of Yishuv leaders. See for instance your honor's statement of March 1943 about "a major massacre of Jews by the tens of thousands and hundreds of thousands"-no millions yet!). These and other facts, with which I do not wish to tire your honor led me to the conclusion which was expressed at the beginning of this letter. I believe I also understand the reason for the conduct of the Zionist Organization-a reason which has to do with the instinct not the nature of Zionism. It is hardly necessary to point out that I did not come to the conclusions I did lightly, and if I have not exaggerated my conclusions then their significance would be nothing short of fateful. Fearing that I might have failed to take into account something elementary which has escaped me, or perhaps there is something I misunderstood, I am asking your honor to grant me a meeting so we can discuss this matter.

Respectfully and Thanking in Advance, S. BeitZvi, 13 May 1962

(Written by the author of "Post-Ugandan Zionism on Trial, available on the site <aaargh-international.org/fran/livres/livres.html>)

The *Patria* Ship

In the latter half of November 1940, a number of ships carrying thousands of immigrants from Europe arrived, among them the *Pacific* and the *Milos*. The immigrants, most of whom fled from the Nazis, got on the ships without the screening that the Jewish Agency conducted, and most were elderly and children. The Jewish Agency had thousands of certificates available which remained unused but someone in the Agency leadership must have decided these Jews did not merit certificates.

They were willing to gamble with their lives in the struggle against the White Paper which limited the number of Jewish immigrants. The Mandate authorities inquired at the Jewish Agency whether these immigrants would be included in the immigration quota set by the White Paper, that is, to use the available certificates to enable these immigrants to get in, but the Agency's answer was a categorical no, accompanied by a huge outcry. (According to the British Colonies Minister Oliver Stanley on February 3, 1943, the Jewish Agency had at the time 29,000 entry visas it could have used for these Jews.) Given the evasive stance of the Jewish Agency, the British began to transfer the passengers of the two ships to another ship, the *Patria* which was in Haifa and was to take them to the island of Mauritius (a British colony).

The Jewish Agency felt otherwise and decided to use the lives of the immigrants for a gamble with a drastic, dramatic act aimed at achieving political goals. Haganah activists took an enormous explosive charge into the ship despite the danger to the lives of the 1,783 people. The ship blew up. The British did all they could to save the passengers, but the number of victims nonetheless reached 257. The following day the Jewish Agency declared that the act was carried out by the passengers themselves in protest. (Christopher Sykes, p. 269)

But in their book the brothers, David and John Kimche (pp. 53-54) say the ship sank 12 minutes after the explosion and the number of passenger victims was 250 in addition to 50 crew and a policeman.

On page 110 of his book, Yigal Alon claims that the number of immigrant victims was 275 but he mentions they died without giving a reason.

Struma

Another ship whose passengers drowned was the *Struma*. In early February 1942 the *Struma* arrived in Istanbul from Europe carrying 769 immigrants sent by Stoufer (a Jew who does not belong to the team of

emissaries sent by the Zionist movement to Europe such as, for example, Bar-Gilead, who represented the Zionist movement in Europe and was the liaison between the Zionist movement and Eichmann).

Stouffer would raise funds from the local community and use them to hire ships which carried anyone who wanted to escape the Nazi hell. This was different from the Zionist method, which involved screening and choice of those suitable for work in settlements (that is, those who met its criteria). But the Mandate authorities refused to allow the ship to dock in Haifa unless the number of annual certificates was reduced by the number of immigrants on board the ship. At that time the Jewish Agency had 25,000 unused entry permits. The ship stood for awhile and then Turkish policemen came and tied it to a motorized boat and took it to the open sea. The ship lacked vital supplies at the time, including water.

The ship sank. Some said it was sunk by a German submarine and others claimed it sank because of a torpedo fired to error from a Soviet ship. But none of these claims was correct, and here is Shabtai Beit-Zvi's research on the matter:

1. There were extremist circles who said they saw a German torpedo ship firing a torpedo at the ship and sinking it, but in the 1960s it became clear that this was not a reasonable assumption because in that period there were no German war ships or submarines in the Black Sea.
2. There were theories that it was one of the Russian submarines which inadvertently sank the ship.
3. Lord Greenborn declared in the Parliament that the passengers themselves may have sabotaged the ship out of desperation, but this theory Is not supported by evidence.
4. There are those who argue that the ship sank due to a deliberate act of terrorism as was the case with the *Patria*.

In 1979 another theory emerged which did not surprise anyone: that "had the Jewish Agency placed the saving of lives above its political goals it would not have sunk this ship." The Zionists chose to take advantage of the explosion and the sinking of the ship in order to arouse world public opinion, sympathy and support for the opening of Palestine's doors. When Moshe Sharett was told, he said "there was no other way."

Some one thousand and two hundred people died as a result of the sinking of two ships (*Patria* and *Struma)* but the Zionist leadership was not deterred from gambling again with the lives of Jews to be sacrificed on the altar of its dubious political goals.

Empire Life Guard

On 20 July 1947, the British seized the ship called *Europe Exodus 1947* and brought it to the Haifa harbor with its 4,550 immigrants on board. They were deported to France but refused to get off the ship. They then were sent to Hamburg in Germany and taken off the ship by force (they resisted).

The Haganah was ordered by the Jewish Agency leadership to carry out a spectacular act, "to teach them a lesson." In the Cyprus camp were 11,000 Jews who attempted to get into Palestine illegally and the British held them in Cyprus. Among them were a number of Americans and the Haganah commander contacted them. They were Mauri Greenfield, Harold Katz (the man in whose New York home the Israeli Mossad made contact with Jonathan Pollard, the famous spy) and another volunteer whose name

was Hugh McDonald. The Haganah commander asked them to blow up the ship, *Empire Life Guard*. Harold and Mauri were instructed to prepare the dynamite bricks and get them on board the ship which arrived in Cyprus and was due to take 750 immigrants from there to the Haifa harbor.

A nurse, Judith Laurstein, was accompanying a handicapped immigrant in a wheelchair. The dynamite bricks were hidden in the wheelchair of the handicapped man and the detonators were hidden in the anus of Sony Weintrop. The explosion was to take place three hours after the detonators were connected (with a chemical material). The saboteurs got on board the ship and placed the dynamite in the lower chamber. The door was locked but they sawed it and when they got close to the shores of Palestine they connected the detonators. Then the ship stopped and docked away from the harbor. The saboteurs contacted Nachshon, the Haganah man in charge, and asked him what to do. For if the ship were to sit too long the explosives would blow up and it would sink with all the immigrants on board.

He replied, "I was taught how to connect detonators to dynamite but not how to disconnect them." But there was a miracle and the ship resumed its trip to Haifa.

The saboteurs got to the harbor and the explosion was heard. The British promptly got the immigrants off the ship and put them on trucks that went to the Atlit camp. Later it was learned that the immigrants were not hurt and that was a blessing from heaven. But those who planned the sabotage did not think about a miracle ... rather about an explosion and about killing people and sinking the ship with all the hundreds of immigrants on board.

For years we were fed stories about the passengers of the immigrant ships *Patria* and *Struma:* that they preferred to die in mid-sea, as a protest against the British mandate not allowing them to set foot on the land of Israel. Unfortunately, world public opinion swallowed these stories.

The Egoz

On the night of January 10- 11, 196 1, a large motorized ship named *Egoz* sank. The ship had been used in World War II to pick up pilots who had fallen into the sea. Forty-two people were on the ship, mostly children from Morocco who were picked up by the Mossad on their way to Israel through Gibraltar. The Israeli government accused the Moroccan government of responsibility for the sinking of the ship and argued that a storm that night was the reason for the sinking. But most Moroccan Jews did not accept this explanation for a number of reasons:

1. The Moroccan government had never prevented Jews from leaving for other countries, even if it knew they were headed to Israel. It did object to selective immigration which meant that the elderly and the more difficult cases were left to be cared for by the Moroccan government. Moroccan government officials presented these arguments before the Joint organization in Morocco a number of times.
2. The Moroccan government, as noted did not stop its Jews from going abroad to another country. But not even the Mossad managed to bring the Jews to Israel directly. Rather, they had to come through a number of intermediate destinations, so why was it necessary to have operations such as what took place with the *Egoz?*
3. Before each sailing, those in charge checked the weather and did not permit the ship to sail if there was any danger of a storm or

strong winds or rain, and even the evening before the ship sailed the Mossad men checked the weather and got in touch with the meteorological station (see the book, *The Yachin Operation,* by Shemuel Segev). They argued that the weather that evening was good and comfortable, so how come all of a sudden a storm raged 10 miles from the shore?

Moroccan Jews have other arguments as well:

1 When *Egoz* departed there was a large rubber boat which was automatically loaded with a gas tank it carried; the boat was permanently attached to the back of *Egoz*. Why did that boat disappear during the sailing? Also,
2. Why were only 22 bodies found? Especially when it was said that all passengers had life jackets?
3. Why was the radio man Chaim Sarfati, who was an excellent swimmer and an outstanding athlete unable to save his own life?

A commission was formed to look into the circumstances of the sinking of the *Egoz*. The commission investigated and submitted a detailed report to BenGurion. But to this day the report has not been made public, and even the families of those who died were not told about the contents of that report. The argument was that such information would be against the security interests of the State of Israel.

This is a groundless argument since the book *The Yachin Operation* was published in Israel and the book has been translated and excerpts published in the large circulation Arabic weekly, *El- Watan EI-Arabi.* Anyone who can read Arabic could learn about the matter, including the names of government ministers from Morocco who had met with Israeli representatives ... so what is there to fear?

A number of Moroccan intellectuals answer that the ship did not sink but rather was sunk, i.e., someone had placed in it a time bomb so it would sink in mid-sea. If you ask them why Israel would do so, their answer is that:

Note – When Shaoul Abi Goor, one of the leaders of the Haganah, was asked about the *Patria* ship sinking, he said: "In spite of the pain about the victims, we had no choice but to do so." (Source: *Brakhah Habas* Hebrew book, *Poursay Hashaarim*, p. 281.) At the time Arab leaders were gathered in Morocco, including Gamal Abdel Nasser who had come to the conference. It is likely that Israel wished to embarrass him and show the Arab world that despite all the security measures taken by the Arabs, Israel's hand could reach even to Morocco where the conference was taking place.

There had been the *Patria, Struma* and *Empire Life Guard* and more ... as Minister Zippori said to *Yediot Aharonot* on October 4, 1984. There was even an attempt to paint an Israeli plane in the colors and symbols of the Egyptian air force and have that plane bomb an Israeli city to provide the excuse to attack Egypt. The Minister went on ' "This is not unprecedented ..." (See the book, *The Yachin Operation,* by Shemuel Segev; the 7 Days section of *Yediot Aharonot,* 20 September, 1991; *Moniteen,* a monthly magazine.)

One thing that raised suspicion was that on the last trip of the motorboat there were many Israeli agents, most of them Mossad activists. The question is, if it was a regular trip, why were there so many Mossad agents, such as (code names) "Alex," "Gilbert" and "Amil." With Alex was a blonde woman and "Dino," an army intelligence officer. Most probably the

reason was that at that time the Casablanca Conference was being held in Morocco and the proof can be found on page 160 of the book *Yachin Operation* by Shumel Segev. It said that "Alex" came to head the "Mesgeret" organization in Morocco on the eve of the Casablanca Conference. This conference was organized by King Mohamed V on January 3, 1961 to discuss the Congo crisis. Participating in the conference was Gamal Abdel Nasser, President of the United Arab Republic government, and leaders from Ghana, Guinea, Mali and all the countries of Africa except South Africa and Rhodesia.

All the countries at the conference were strongly anti-Western and on page 158 we find that one of the reasons for this kind of emigration was also to prove to the Moroccan government that in spite of the restrictions placed by the government, emigration continued. Probably the reasons for the presence of this large group of Mossad and intelligence officers in Morocco was not to illegally take the forty children out of the country but to create a provocation against Gamal Abdel Nasser and the other Arab leaders supporting him. This opinion is prevalent among most Jews of Moroccan descent. Therefore, they went to the Supreme Court in order to force the Israeli government to publish the outcome of the investigation.

Moroccan Jews will not forget how their neighborhoods were bombed by Israeli agents in 1951 and all the leaflets that appeared following that, calling on the Jews to leave for Israel (Shalom Cohen, John Fric, Vol. 894, 12/22/78). The same thing was done by the Zionist movement agents in Iraq.

Notice: I am not sure who perpetrated the dirty deed in sinking this ship but the Israeli policy at that time proved that this type of policy was in the interest of the Israeli government. The symbolic sinking of the *Patria* and *Struma* with many passengers was attempted again with the third ship – the *Empire Life Guard* – showing that the lives of the Jewish refugees had no value in the game of Israeli policy.

The author used the following sources:

1. *Brakhah Habas* Hebrew book, *Poursay Hashaarim*.
2. Shbtai Beit-Zvi, *Post Ugandian Zionism in the Crucible of the Holocaust* (in Hebrew). [English translation: *Post-Ugandan Zionism on Trial*]
3. John and David Kimche book, pages 53 and 54.
4. *Yediot Aharonot*, September 20, 1991.
5. *Moniteen*, a monthly magazine, September 1986.
6. The article of Yashayhoo Abiam, *Maariv*.

Behind the Meeting between Adenauer and Ben-Gurion

In an atmosphere of cooperation and mutual understanding, in March 1960 a meeting was held in New York between Chancellor Adenauer and Prime Minister Ben-Gurion which precisely confirmed the political orientation between Israel and Bonn. An intrinsic element of this meeting was the Eichmann affair. Adenauer obtained from Ben-Gurion assurance that during the Eichmann trial no attacks would be made against the Federal Republic of Germany by comparing it with the Third Reich, that no responsibility for Nazi crimes would be blamed on the Federal Republic of Germany and that the court conducting the case would divert all attempts by the defense to use as witness "the commentator" of the Nuremburg laws, Adenauer's State Secretary Globke.

Adenauer could not directly pose these questions to Ben-Gurion. This was the reason they were undertaken in two stages, using the Minister of Defense of Germany, Strauss.

Shortly the talks between Ben-Gurion and Adenauer were continued between Strauss and Shimon Peres, General Director of Ministry of Defense of Israel who consulted with their respective chiefs of state.

During the direct talks between Ben-Gurion and Adenauer, the main promise was that the Bundewehr (Germany) would provide weapons to Israel. Because of the turn of events in the Middle East, the Israeli army, manufacturing its own weapons with special thanks to the West German capital investment, still needed weapons of high tech level. During the secret talks Adenauer promised Ben-Gurion that West Germany would supply such weapons worth 320 million marks.

With this agreement settled, Strauss and Peres took over direct talks. During the two-sided talks they agreed on a delivery from West Germany to Israel of a certain quantity of tanks, of different types (made in Germany under USA license), armored carriers, German torpedo launchers and airplanes. Peres also was greatly interested in purchasing from Germany new 40-ton tanks and submarines and proposed that Israelis be sent to train in Germany. Exact data on the quantity of military equipment to be delivered was not published due to the secrecy of the deliveries.

By means of information taken from the press (i.e., *Vesnik*, February 9, 1965; *Der Spiegel*, Nov. 6, 1965), one can conclude that from 1964 Germany delivered to Israel a variety of military equipment including 200 tanks, 5 torpedoes and a certain number of military aircraft, armored transporters, ammunition and a range of other kinds of weapons.

Agreements on the delivery of military equipment were not the only result of the meeting of Ben-Gurion and Adenauer in New York and subsequently between Strauss and Peres.

Under discussion was the payment of reparations arranged at the Luxembourg Agreement. Adenauer promised Ben-Gurion that further payments would be made to Israel as regularly as had been up to now. They agreed that Germany would grant Israel the amount of 500 million dollars. This new deal between Germany and Israel would cause displeasure in Arab countries and for this reason no details about it would be widely publicized.

Strauss received promises from Ben-Gurion that the Eichmann trial would not be used for propaganda against Germany and the Israeli court would not satisfy the demand by the defense to order Germany to send to the trial a witness, Hans Globke, a close colleague of Adenauer.

The progress of the Eichmann trial and attitude of the Israeli government and leaders of Zionist organizations in this matter showed that the promises of Ben-Gurion were entirely fulfilled. They were moreover, the main reason for the reaching of agreements between Adenauer and Ben-Gurion, Strauss and Peres.

Israel gradually became the biggest customer of Germany in the Middle East. Germany exports to Israel comprised 25% of the total exports to Middle East countries and significantly exceeded exports to the United Arab Republic (Egypt). [T. Valikhnovski (*Za Rubezhom*) No. 39 (432) Sept. 20-26, 1968.]

Because Ben-Gurion promised Adenauer not to link the Eichman trial to the Federal Republic of Germany, he refused the request of Nathum Goldmann, the president of the World Jewish Congress to make the Eichmann trial an international one. The trial proved to be a farce and a great disappointment to all who had hoped that an open trial would be a condemnation of Nazism and racism. Instead, it became a trial against

one person, Eichmann. In the complete picture of the racism of the Nazi regime, Eichmann was a small cog in a big wheel. All who followed this trial wanted the total picture and total expense of the racism of the Nazis. For the price of 300 million marks, a historical opportunity was lost to open the eyes of the world to the racism of the Nazis. (In the end they only received 30 million marks.)

THREE

Tension on the Border

In the beginning of 1951, Israel began the process of drying the "Hahoola" Lake. It was part of the National Drinking Water Way project that involved the transport of water from the Kinneret Lake to the Negev via cement pipes. In the town of Ashkelon the government established a factory to manufacture these pipes that were wide enough to drive a jeep through.

The Israeli government also attempted to win over Jordanian and Syrian territories in order to add more water sources to its ongoing water project. Any time the Jordanians or Syrians resisted the process, Israel answered with military action.

Dwight D. Eisenhower, the then American president, decided to intervene to calm things down. He sent Mr. Johnson who was a water specialist to try and resolve the situation. Mr. Ben-Gurion, the then Israeli Prime Minister, knew that through negotiation, Israel would not get the maximum water allocation, so he decided to sabotage Johnson's mission with provocations along the border. This would create a no-win situation where no agreement of any kind would take place.

One of the provocations was the bombing of villagers at Qibya on the night of the 13th and 14th of October, 1953. This action set forth a wave of protest against the Israeli government and forced Ben-Gurion to resign and move to Kibbutz Sedeh Boker. He was succeeded by Moshe Sharett. However, through his supporters in the Army, Ben-Gurion kept on ordering the provocations behind Mr. Sharett's back. All that in order to make the Jordanians react and give Israel a reason to conquer Jordan.

The massacre of 69 women and children was so horrible, public opinion throughout the world was against this action by a civilized country.

David Cohen, one of the Labor party leaders said in his letter to Moshe Sharett, the Prime Minister:

> The murder frenzy which gripped our men, this Deir Yassin under the umbrella of the government and its full responsibility, being carried out by the IDF is literally blood curdling. In about half an hour I am supposed to go with all the goyirn to our last joint meeting at the UN. Of course I will not go because I will be unable to take their astonishment at Nazi deeds by me and my colleagues. But this is not what matters, despite its tremendous political significance, but the very fact that such murders of fifty men and women and children occurred with the best people in

> charge of the job: Ben-Gurion, Moshe Sharett, Lavon, Maklef and Dayan.
>
> Excerpt from David Hacohen's letter to Moshe Sharett. *Maariv*, October 19, 1984.

Mrs. Livia Rokach, the daughter of Mr. Israel Rokach, the then Interior Minister, wrote about one of the military actions. She based her'story on Moshe Sharett's personal diary. [included in *The Israeli Terrorism File*, available in pdf from: <http://ggb.0catch.com>]

The Provocation

> On March 17, 1954, a bus traveling from Eilat to Beersheba was attacked in Ma'aleh Haakrabim crossroads. Ten passengers were killed and four survived. According to Israeli army trackers, all traces of the perpetrators disappeared at a distance of ten kilometers from the Jordanian border. One of the survivors, a sergeant responsible for security arrangements on the trip, testified that the attackers were "Bedouin." Another survivor, a woman said there were "five men wearing long robes." The Army, according to Sharett, "then dispatched some of his Arab informers in the village of Tel Tsafi, (on the Jordanian side of the border) opposite Sodom." Upon their return, the informers reported that "a group of 8-10 persons had been seen crossing the border westward (that day) by Tel Tsafi villagers. Quite apart from the fact that it was customary, since time immemorial, for the area's nomad population to cross back and forth at that point, there must have been something much too strange about this story of informers and villagers offering evidence. Colonel Hutcheson, the American chairman of the mixed Jordanian-Israeli Armistice Commission, did not take it seriously. Summing up the Commission's inquiry, Colonel Hutcheson in fact officially announced that "from the testimonies of the survivors it is not proved that all the murderers were Arabs." (3/23/54; p. 411)

Moreover, in a confidential report dated March 24, addressed to General Benike, Hutcheson explicitly attributed the attack on the bus to terrorists intent on heightening the tensions in the area as well as on creating trouble for the present government.

Sharett hinted that the report was clandestinely intercepted by the Israelis. He also aired the possibility that Hutcheson intended to refer to elements from the Irgun, acting against his government, but then rejected this hypothesis. In this connection it is interesting to recall that in a debate in the Knesset (*Divrei Haknesset Hashnya*, p. 654) on January 25, 1955, a Herut spokesman, Arie Altmann, attacked the government for its "weaknesses" and added: "If the government will not comply with its duties in the security field, don't be surprised if one day you will be confronted with the surprising phenomena of private initiatives, and not just one initiative, but a very complex and ramified one ...

> "In his *Mistraim Ve'Ha Fadayeen*, Ehud Ya'ari mentions the existence at that time, of a terrorist group operating in border areas under the name of 'Tadmor Group' of which he says 'no details are yet available.'"

These disclosures suggest that a close co-operation existed at one time on an operative- clandestine level, between the terrorist Zionist organizations-the Irgun and the Stern gang, which were officially dissolved in 1948, but in fact continued to act militarily. Regular army or "security" units such as the paratroopers corps and Sharon's Unit 101, the latter Ya'ari recalls, "cooperated its own unpublicized infiltrations into the Gaza Strip ... accomplishing actions such as the attack on the refugee camp at Al Burj, near Gaza on August 31, 1953."

Further research on this subject might reveal that the extent of the acts of aggressive provocations by Israeli forces across the armistice lines were much vaster than has ever been known publicly. However, the most important aspect of these relations lies in their political significance, which offers a completely new key to the interpretation of the history of the Zionist state. In fact, they constitute a decisive refutation of the accepted thesis according to which a distinct division, marked by ideological, political and pragmatic antagonisms, existed at least up to 1965 between labor Zionism and the so-called "irrational Zionism" of revisionist origin.

Thereupon the Israelis left the Armistice Commission in protest, and launched a world-wide campaign against Arab terrorism and Arab bloodthirsty hatred of Jews. From his retreat in Sedeh Boker, Ben-Gurion demanded that Israel occupy Jordanian territory and threatened to leave the Mapai party leadership if Sharett's policy were once again to have the upper hand. Lavon too, pressed for action. On April 4, the Premier wrote to Ben-Gurion:

> I heard that after Ma'aleh Ha'akrabim, you thought that we should occupy Jordanian territory. In my opinion, such a step would have us dragged into a war with Jordan supported by Britain, while the U.S. would have condemned us in front of the whole world and treated us as an aggressor. For Israel this could have meant disaster, even perhaps destruction. (4/4/54; p. 453)

Sharett attempted to avert military action. He told officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that "we are all of the opinion that a retaliation for such bloodshed will only weaken its horrible impression and will put us on the same level as the murderers on the other side. It would be better for us to use the Ma'aleh Ha'akrabim incident as a lever for a political attack on the powers so that they will exercise unprecedented pressure on Jordon." He also pointed out that a retaliation would weaken the effect of the massive propaganda campaign which, he noted in his diary, should counter "the attention given by the American press to the Jordanian version ... according to which the Ma'aleh Ha'akrabim massacre was committed by the Israelis."

Not only in public but in his private notes, the Prime Minister declared his reluctance to believe this version. Israel launched a particularly virulent campaign about Ma'aleh Halakrabim, and renewed the campaign as a justification of the 1956 attack on Egypt.

Deep down in his heart, however, Sharett too, must have had his unconfessed doubts. He not only blocked the proposed military actions, but decided Israel should refrain from complaining to the Security Council, i.e., from an international debate which he thought might be counter-productive. He felt he had acted wisely when Dayan, in the course of a conversation on April 23, let drop that "he is not convinced that the Ma'aleh Ha'akrabim massacre was the work of an organized military gang." He later learned from the British journalist, Jon Kimche, that Dayan had said about Ma'aleh Haakrabim that "UN reports are often more accurate than ours."

He wrote: "From another source I heard this week that Dayan had said to Israeli journalists that it was not proved that the Ma'aleh Haakrabim gang was Jordanian-it is possible that it was local."

Of course, it didn't occur to Sharett to open an internal investigation in order to find out the truth. On the contrary, he insisted on the removal of Colonel Hutcheson from his post as a condition for Israel's return to the Armistice Commission. The military though, were reluctant to give in to his veto on a new attack of the West Bank. Taking for a pretext, not Ma'aleh Ha'akrabim, but a subsequent minor incident in the Jerusalem corridor area, on the night of March 28, the army launched a massive attack on the village of Nahlin, near Bethlehem. Dozens of civilians were killed and wounded, the houses demolished, the village-another Palestinian villagecompletely destroyed.

> I said to Teddy Kollek (then senior aide in the Prime Minister's office, today's Mayor of Jerusalem): Here we are, back at the point of departure-are we headed for war or do we want to prevent war? According to Teddy, the army leadership is imbued with war appetites. They are completely blind to economic problems and the complexities of international relations. (3/31/54, p.426)

Arab capitals too, were persuaded that the Israeli escalation of self-provoked incidents, terrorism and renewed retaliation meant that Israel was preparing the ground for war. They therefore stationed military reinforcements along the borders and took strong measures to prevent any infiltration into Israel. This in turn worried the Israelis. "The situation along the borders is better than it has been for a long time. Actually it is quite satisfactory," Dayan told a journalist friend who reported it to Sharett on May 17.

A new and more subtle strategy of covert aggression was thereupon introduced by the Israeli army. Its aim was to bypass both the Arab security arrangements and Sharett's reluctance to authorize attacks across the border. Small patrols slipped into the West Bank and Gaza with precise directives to engage isolated Egyptian or Jordanian military patrols, or to penetrate into villages for sabotage or murder actions. Invariably, each such action was falsely described later by an official announcement as having occurred in Israeli territory. Once attacked, the military spokesman would explain, the patrol proceeded to pursue the aggressors into enemy territory. Almost daily actions of this kind, carried out by Arik Sharon's special paratroops, caused a great number of casualties. Regularly, the Prime Minister was left to guess how things really went. Between April and June he noted in his diary that he learned by chance, for example, of the cold- blooded murder of a young Palestinian boy who happened to find himself on the Israeli patrol's way near his village in the West Bank.

With regard to another incident he wrote:

> General Beneka, the UN head of the Jordan-Israel Mixed Armistice Commission, refused to censure Jordan because he saw that the Israeli canine units and the bedouins had found no footprints on the border crossing from Jordan into Israel. For this reason he refused to censure Jordan and the Israeli member of this commission walked out of the meeting, but I do not see that it is enough. But I do remember that one of my friends came from Eilat in a pickup truck of a construction contractor and found on the ground bullet capsules with the imprint, "Product of Israel Military Industries."

The author used as a source, *Israel's Sacred Terrorism*, by Livia Rokach. This book quotes from the personal diaries of Moshe Sharett, former Foreign Minister and Prime Minister of Israel. At the start of the publishing of thousands of pages of the diary, pressure was brought to bear using the term that to publish would be "dangerous" to the defense of Israel. When the Israeli public learned of the pressure on Maariv their reaction to censorship in a so-called democratic government was like an atom bomb; also, the fact that the Mossad and the Foreign Minister could stop the publishing of this book.

Ben-Gurion and Peace

Immediately after the "white" (bloodless) coup in Egypt succeeded (July 23, 1952) Ben-Gurion congratulated the new regime under Muhammed Nagib. Israel had received early information from American intelligence that the officers who overthrew King Faruk's regime were being helped by the intelligence agency in the Middle East. Indeed, Miles Copland and Kermit Roosevelt were in the middle. (See *The Game of Nations*, by Miles Copland.)

But later on the officers, particularly Gamal Abdel Nasser began to work seriously on finally breaking Egypt's dependence on Britain and other countries. They simply demanded that the British give them a timetable to take their forces out of the Suez.

At that time Abdel Nasser "dared" refuse the Western invitation that he join the Baghdad Treaty which was a military anti-Soviet alliance. He said he was not convinced that the Soviet Union had any aggressive plans against Egypt and therefore, Egypt had no interest in either military Bloc.

In order to check the Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser (Israel's role is like a guard dog for the Western states whose job is to punish any Arab or other state which gets out of hand and acts contrary to the interests of the western powers in the Middle East – *Haaretz*, 30 September 1951 editorial) Ben Gurion began to voice slogans such as: "Abdel Nasser is the Hitler of the Middle East and he intends to destroy Israel."

The Jewish Lord

it was precisely in those days that the British Lord Maurice Orbach of the Labor Party was going back and forth between Cairo and Jerusalem via London and conveying messages between Abdel Nasser and Moshe Sharett (who was then Prime Minister of Israel). The latter asked Nasser to be lenient with those accused of spying for Israel, who had been caught in acts of sabotage in the very heartland of Egypt. Abdel Nasser did all that was in his power to prevent a deterioration of the situation at the border.

Ben-Gurion was then a voluntary exile at the Sadeh Boker Kibbutz in the Negev. This exile resulted from the international outrage after the Israeli massacre in the Jordanian village of Qibyah on October 14, 1953 in which 69 woman and children were killed after their homes were blown up by paratroopers under the command of Ariel Sharon. This massacre was carried out by Israel in order to undermine the mission of President Eisenhower's envoy, Mr. Johnston who was to arrive in the region in order to arrange the matter of water allocation among Syria, Israel and Jordan through peaceful means.

Then Ben-Gurion returned as Defense Minster in early February 1955 and started to make a fuss. He came back to the Defense Treaty. Israeli paratroopers left for Gaza where they stayed for a night, and on the night of

February 28, 1955 they attacked Egyptian military camps as well as Palestinian refuges. There were more than 54 deaths and a large number of injured. On the same night of the attack Lord Maurice Orbach had been on his way to deliver a verbal message to the Egyptian President Abd al-Nasser. He found Cairo's roads filled with soldiers because of the attack. He called Nasser's secretary and the secretary answered that the President was very upset over the attack. Nasser said this attack proves that Israel does not want peace, that he was wasting his time and Israel had lost the opportunity for peace. (See report in the *Jewish Chronicle*, 30 July 1965.)

In November 1955 an Israeli military force attacked an Egyptian military camp in the Sabaha (Nitzana) region. The attack occurred on the morning following Ben-Gurion's declaration in the Knesset the evening before that he was willing to meet with Abdel Nasser anywhere and at any time for the sake of peace and understanding. Even though the Egyptian leader felt pessimistic about peace, it did not stop him from sending other mediators to Israel.

Another attempt by Abdel Nasser was through the Quaker organization but Ben-Gurion did not want to listen. Yet another attempt was through the Prinie Minister of Malta, Dom Minthoff (sabotaged by the British) in an effort through agents who met with the former commander of the Najada attorney Mohammed Namer EI-Hawari. The meeting took place in Athens, Greece and EI- Hawari passed on his note to the Israeli Foreign Ministry. He told them the Egyptian delegation would be waiting for their reply.

But the Israeli government took his passport and wouldn't let him leave the country.

It was obvious that the attacks on the Egyptian border would eventually lead to a real war, and for this reason Abdel Nasser sent his friend Ibrahim Izat of the *Ruz-El-Yusuf* weekly to Israel to meet with Israeli leaders, explore the political atmosphere and find out why the attacks were taking place if Israel really wanted peace.

When Izat returned to Egypt Gamal Abdel Nasser was waiting for him to hear what the Israeli leaders had to say.

Yigal Yadin wrote a letter to the author in 1982. Yadin was a former General in the IDF and Chief of Staff of the Army. He was a professor of Archaeology and a published writer about the history of Israel and the Jewish nation. Before he died, he was an advisor to Prime Minister Menachem Begin.

When Abdel Nasser decided to nationalize the Suez Canal and the British and the French began their outcry, Radio Cairo announced in Hebrew:

> If the Israeli government is not influenced by the British and the French Imperialists, it will eventually result in greater understanding between the two states, and Egypt will reconsider Israel's request to have access to the Suez Canal.

Israel gave an official answer that it had no designs on Egypt but at the same time its representatives were in France to plan a three-way attack (Israel, Britain and France) against Egypt. The Sinai war took place eventually in late October 1956.

Israel continued to refer to Nasser as "the Hitler of the Middle East" and many operations took place on the borders with Egypt. Dennis Hamilton, the British journalist of the *London Times*, traveled a. number of times between London, Jerusalem and Cairo carrying messages of Nasser's readiness to reach a settlement and put an end to the state of war between the two countries. But Ben-Gurion undermined it by saying, "Israel

will not give up an inch of land and will not take back a single refugee."(A reference to the Palestinian refugees.)

Eventually Ben-Gurion resigned from the government following the Lavon Affair and the finding of the commission of inquiry that it was not Lavon who had given the orders to carry out Israeli acts of sabotage in Egypt (July 1954).

There were additional attacks and finally Israel started a war against Egypt, Syria and Jordan (June 1967). Nasser again attempted to reach a settlement with Israel through Gunnar Jaring but Golda Meir who was then Prime Minister, refused these attempts.

The Israeli brainwashing went on until late September 1970 when Gamal Abdel Nasser passed away, and miracle of miracles:

David Ben-Gurion told the press: "A week before he died I received an envoy from Abdel Nasser who asked to meet with me urgently in order to solve the problems between Israel and the Arab world."

Although the public was surprised, I and others who knew that Abdel Nasser sincerely wanted to solve the problems between Israel and Egypt, were not. Israel sabotaged Nasser's and Egypt's peace efforts.

Before Abdel Nasser passed away, I wrote to BenGurion and asked about the "major secret" mentioned in an article by Hamilton. Ben-Gurion hinted it was true. (See Ben-Gurion's letter translated into English.) In regard to Hamilton's mediation, on June 13, 1982, I met with Itzhak Navon when he was president of Israel and asked him about the number of attempts by Abdel Nasser to make peace, e.g., the Hamilton affair as well as the other attempt through Marshall Tito, the president of Yugoslavia.

President Navon who was at the time Ben-Gurion's secretary and witnessed all these attempts confirmed they were real.

And now, as described by Itzhak Shamir, we have a new Hitler of the Middle East-Saddam Hussein, the Iraqi president.

The author used the following sources:

Conversation with Mohammed Namer EI-Hawari; conversation with Yigal Yadin.

47 Ramban St. Phone 14.1.82 Jerusalem 92 268
Mr. Naeim Giladi
PO Box 18126
Tel Aviv 61281

Dear Mr. Giladi,

Your letter reminded me of an event which I nearly forgot and of which I remember only a few details.

Ibrahim Izat came to me if I am not mistaken under the request of the Foreign Ministry or one of its branches; he stayed in my house and we spoke for many hours. I do not remember him saying that he came on a mission from Nasser, but I have no doubt that he let it be understood that this was with his knowledge or acquiescence.

As you know, his articles did not accurately reflect the positive things he said in the conversations but I remember that he explained to the Israelis at the time that he had to do so for tactical reasons, of course.

To my great regret, I am unable to help you beyond this.

Sincerely
Yigal Yadin

In early 1962 Hamilton visited Egypt and met with Nasser. In a talk which went on for many hours they came to the topic of the Israeli-Arab

conflict and then the Egyptian president said, "If I could sit with BenGurion for two-three hours we would be able to settle the Israeli-Arab conflict."

Hamilton wrote down the words verbatim. In London he ran into the Israeli ambassador, Arthur Luria at a dinner given by one of the diplomats and in the course of the dinner, Hamilton recounted what he had heard from President Nasser. Luria sent a report through the diplomatic pouch about this conversation to the Israeli Foreign Ministry.

The report was passed on to Ben-Gurion's attention. With the aid of his Secretary Itzhak Navon (eventually elected President of Israel) Ben-Gurion looked at the report. Later he suggested that Hamilton come to his office.

The Israeli ambassador in London was told in a prompt response to notify Hamilton of this, who was ready to go see Ben-Gurion without delay. A few days later Hamilton arrived in Israel and stayed at the Dan Hotel in Tel Aviv under an assumed name. That same evening he met with a government representative and went to Ben-Gurion's house on Keren Kayemet Boulevard in Tel Aviv.

Ben-Gurion asked Hamilton to repeat every detail of his conversation with Nasser. Hamilton did so and Ben-Gurion was attentive.

At the end he suggested that Hamilton return to Egypt under the pretext of a return visit or some other good reason and offer Nasser his services for a meeting with Ben-Gurion. Before Hamilton's departure it was decided that the Israeli ambassador in London would be the liaison person between Hamilton and the Israeli Foreign Ministry.

Hamilton went to Cairo twice and during the third trip when he communicated Ben-Gurion's readiness for a meeting, President Nasser told him, "Look and judge for yourself." He then pointed to a current report under which Ben-Gurion said, "There is nothing to discuss about allowing a single (Palestinian) refugee to return nor about one inch of land (a reference to the lands occupied by Israel above and beyond the boundaries determined by U.N. resolution 181)." Hamilton saw the text and became palehe knew that Ben-Gurion, with this statement, had undermined a peace mission and missed an opportunity to settle the Israeli-Arab conflict.

Hamilton returned to London but did not meet with Ambassador Luria immediately. Some time later he told him what he had heard. The ambassador reported to Ben-Gurion that Hamilton "had met a different Abdel Nasser."

I had this story in my possession already in May of 1968, but I wanted to have proof or a document from Ben-Gurion in person.

I wrote a letter to Ben-Gurion in which I noted that I came across a book in Arabic published in Beirut which tells the story, but I wrote Hamilton's name and the name of his newspaper in code using only the initials. I wrote other letters on purpose so he would correct me and thus actually confirm the veracity of the report.

A few days later I received an answer from Ben-Gurion in which he actually corrected the initials and confirmed the veracity of the report. He asked me to send him the book, which I did not have.

(Publisher's note: In the flrst edition of this book, Mr. Giladi reproduced Ben-Gurion's original letter in Hebrew.)

But I did not settle for this, given the importance of the letter. In June 1982, I wrote to the office of the Itzhak Navon, now president of Israel, and requested a meeting. The meeting was set for June 18, 1982 for half an hour, but it went on for an hour and a half.

In the meeting the President confirmed to me that there had been two attempts, one by Hamilton and the other by Mr. Cohen, who had been sent to meet President Joseph Tito in order to mediate between Ben-Gurion and Abdel Nasser.

Below is Ben-Gurion's answer translated into English.

The author used the following source: Conversation with Israeli President, Mr. Itzhak Navon on June 18, 1982.

Sde Boker 13, May 1968
To: Naim Giladi, Hello and Greetings

I regret that I wasn't able to promptly answer your letter of May 6, 1968. Can you remind me who is the author of the book published in the city of Beirut? (What is the author's name. The book I assume is in Arabic?) There are minor inaccuracies in your notes from the above book. The name of the newspaper does not begin with a B but with a T. I did not "have to" resign – not due to misunderstanding with those around me but due to my own personal reasons which no factor, person, or external event had any part in. It is true that the Prime Minister of Burma attempted under my request to speak with Nasser but as with all other attempts with Nasser, it was unsuccessful. Yet from the few comments you made on the basis of the book from Beirut, I see that the author has information on this matter. I do not know whether you have my book about meetings with Arab leaders. This book only tells about meeting with Arab leaders before the state was established. The material I have about meetings while the state exists cannot be published yet and I am surprised how a fraction of these attempts has reached the man from Beirut.

The first letter of the name that you call Mr. B begins with H and not a B.

Could I have even for a short time the book from Beirut?

Respectfully,
David Ben-Gurion
P O Box 28126 Tel Aviv

FOUR

Iraqi Jewry: A Glorious History

Jews came to Mesopotamia (today's Iraq) some three thousand years ago. During the Ottoman rule, they thrived. Leaders of the Zionist movement knew the truth about the events of June 1941 but did not disclose it to the Jews of Iraq for fear that they would abandon Zionism. The Israeli government and the international Zionist institutions were behind the bombings in Baghdad.

Iraq, or Mesopotamia as it was called in ancient times, lies at the crossroads between Europe and India and served as a way station between Asia and the European continent. From earliest times it was a strategic and economic center.

Iraq was also known as "The Fertile Crescent" because it has access to several rivers. The two main rivers, the Tigris and the Euphrates, in addition to other water sources, turned the country into a land of butter, honey and dates. The fertile lands of ancient Iraq drew many wandering tribes, especially in times of drought or as refugees from endless wars.

Thus, because of its location as well as its rich soil, every great kingdom and Empire at some time has tried to conquer it. Iraq has been invaded by the Greeks, Persians, Romans, Mongols and later the Ottomans and the British.

Some three thousand years ago, Jews farmed the land along the banks of the Euphrates and as far as Shatt El-Arab (Persian Gulf) or raised sheep and livestock. But after the fall of Nineveh, the Assyrian capital, in 598-596 B.C., Zedekiah, king of Judah and the last king of the Davidic dynasty, was taken prisoner and the elite of the Jewish population was deported to Babylon.

These Jewish exiles created for the second time (the first time was in Egypt) a large community outside of Palestine, on the Banks of the Euphrates. Many of them settled there and established their own livelihood, while others continued to move eastward as far as Elam. When more land was needed, some moved north. Settlements with Hebrew names such as Tel Aviv, Tel Hersha and Tel Melach were established on the banks of the Euphrates.

These settlements eventually turned into cities, and the elders established institutions, creating communities that had autonomy on

matters of religion, heritage, language and culture. Welfare institutions were established. All this enabled the Jewish exiles to preserve their distinct way of life, which the local authorities allowed them to do. Thus they enjoyed full autonomy and, over a period of time, there were relatively a large number of authors, poets and craftsmen among the exiles. They began with religious verses and proceeded to write the *History of the Kings of Israel*. They produced a large quantity of diverse and rich material that served as the basis for the *Book of the Books*.

Many years passed and the King of Babylon, the legendary commander Nebuchadnezzar II, died and was succeeded by his son Evil-Merodach. Evil-Merodach adopted a liberal policy toward his subjects, including the Jewish exiles. He released Yeoiachin, the son of Zedekiah, from jail and conferred upon him the honor of heading the Jewish community in the. Babylonian Diaspora. Hence the title "Head of Diaspora" for leaders of the Jewish Diaspora, or *Rosh Galut* as it was called then.

In practice, the Babylonian Diaspora became a state within a state, or more accurately a government within a government. The Babylonian Diaspora had a major effect upon its surroundings but was of little influence itself. At times, longings for the return to Israel were voiced, and the matter was expressed in most of what was created, such as the slogan: "If I forget thee O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning!" Some returned to Palestine, but they were mostly elderly people who wished to be buried in Israel. Most of the Jews, however, chose to continue to enjoy the fruits and honey of the land.

Commander Cyrus

The Achmedian tribes of the Kingdom of Elam (part of today's Iran) rebelled against the Kassite Empire. At their head was Cyrus who laid the foundation for the new Persian Empire. Within a short time he managed to organize an army of trained fighters and set out to besiege the city of Babylon. It was a heavily fortified city, but a prolonged siege, combined with the work of Cyrus' men who had earlier sneaked into the city, ultimately led to the downfall of Babylon.

The Persian conquerors worked hard to gain the trust of the Jews. When he decided to attack Jerusalem, he had his emissaries convince the Jews to immigrate to their country and Jews loyal to him coined the slogan: "He who is with God, join me!" meaning, "He who is with Jehovah's religion should join Cyrus' army on its way to Jerusalem."

Only a small percentage of Babylonian Jews chose to go to Jerusalem. According to some writings, the number of returning Jews did not exceed 40,000.

However those who did leave with Cyrus' army are said to have taken the holy artifacts, which the Babylonians had previously removed from-the Temple.

The wealthy, the professionals and state employees and especially the landowners stayed in Babylon. With that migration, a close link was established between Babylon and Jerusalem. Those who stayed established successful businesses and organized settlements under a liberal and friendly government. Some Jews moved to Nevitzin and Nehardea, two ancient cities.

For nearly two hundred years, the Persians ruled Babylon, and during this long period, Babylonian Jewry enjoyed cultural, societal and economic prosperity. Members of the community were represented in all professions and fields, ranging from farming to the military, with senior officer positions.

The Talmudic Era

Hebrew became a language reserved for sacred functions and Aramaic was used for everyday communication. The culture and spiritualism of the leaders of the Babylon Diaspora influenced the surrounding peoples.

During the reign of Herodius I (Herod the Great) in Judea, the Hudaiv Kingdom, where the Kurdistan lies today, converted to Judaism. In the year 70 AD, the Roman legions under Titus conquered Jerusalem and destroyed the Temple. Thus began the Second Babylonian Exile.

These exiled Jews established some two hundred new Jewish settlements. Torah sages and scholars who were persecuted by the Romans came to Babylon and established an independent Torah center. They trained rabbis and community leaders. Pumbedita was established over the ruins of Nehardea, which had been destroyed by the army of Tadmor. Similarly, Sura was established by Aba Aricho, and with the establishment of these two centers began the work of the Talmud. At these centers, scholars taught the sciences as well as Torah and religion. They were in effect universities rather than religious yeshivas.

The masterpiece that is the Talmud is a collection of the materials developed by the Babylonian sages of this era. In practice, the Babylonian community became the spiritual center of world Jewry, and continued to be so until the 13th century.

The Islamic Era

The Babylonian Diaspora went through different periods: the Sassanid Period, the Moslem Period and the Rule of the Caliphs. During this latter era, Babylon Jews enjoyed more freedom than during any other time, and it is noteworthy that during the reign of Caliph Abou Jaafar Al-Mansour, the city of *Madinat Es-Salarn* (City of Peace) was established near the ancient town of Baghdad. The Jews in the region were faring so well, the Head of the Diaspora at the time, Rabbi Shlomo Hasday, moved his quarters to the new capital.

In that period, the Moslem faith and religion went through deep changes. A new movement emerged (*Kharijism*), that repudiated the authority of *Al-Hadith* (the collection of Mohammed's sayings which has become Islam's oral law) and called for a return to the ways of the Qur'an.

A parallel change took place in the Jewish community that called for a return to the religious basics (the literal religion of Moses). It rejected the interpretations of latter times. Anan Ben-David headed this movement and these Jews were known as the Karaites. Their influence spread beyond Babylon, resulting in a split of Jewry into two camps separated by a formidable abyss.

With the Talmudic era at risk, Rabbi Saadia Gaon was invited to Babylon to redress the situation. He struggled against the Karaites and managed to reduce their influence.

A Useful Hebrew Dictionary

Rabbi Saadia Gaon translated the Torah into Arabic. He compiled a Hebrew dictionary for the Biblical language and the *Book of Beliefs and Views (Kitab Al-Imanat wa Al-I'tikadat)*, which became the basis for the metaphysical thought of traditional Jewry.

Babylonian Jewry also thrived during the reign of Caliph Harun Al-Rashid (the Golden Era). But as the Abbassid dynasty declined, the

financial resources needed to maintain the big yeshivas dwindled. Babylon and the Golden Era of the sage Sharira Gaon marked the end of the Era of the Sages. The great scholars left Babylon for Spain where a Jewish spiritual center was forming.

The Seljukes and the Crusaders left their marks on Babylon's Jewry. The Crusaders massacred Moslems and Jews in Palestine. Refugees told the Babylonians about the massacre, interpreting it as a sign that the Messiah was coming. A Jew named David Ben-Shlomo Ibn Al-Ruhi (David Alroi) proclaimed himself Messiah, gathered a large group of believers in Northern Iraq and began a war against the Seljukes. He was killed and his group disintegrated.

Timur Lang

In the year 1383 the armies of Timur Lang (Tamerlane), the Mongolian conqueror, brought their blood and fire to Baghdad as well as Basra in the South and Mosul in the north. They massacred some 10,000 people.

Jewish Ministers

The Jews quickly adapted to the Mongolian conquest, as the occupiers needed their skills to run the country. Jews began to fill senior government positions. Saad-Ullah Al-Abbar, Minister of Economic Affairs, introduced far-reaching reforms in the economy. Rashid Al-Dolah Abu El- Khir rose in the government ranks and became Grand Vizier, the equivalent of Prime Minister-but only after he converted to Islam.

In 1508, the Persian King Ismael Ben-Hider, a Shiite Moslem, attacked Baghdad, and conducted a massacre of Sunni Moslems in the major cities of Iraq. For some reason, he left the Jews alone. His son Tahmasis Shah, only ten years of age, succeeded him. A tool in the hands of the religious Shiite leaders, he conducted a purge of the "infidels" Jews and Christians), adding yet another massacre to the history of the Babylonian Diaspora.

The Ottoman Era

In the late 15th century, the Ottomans crossed the Dardanelles, took control of Asia Minor, and occupied the Balkan countries. The Sultans (Ottoman Kings) were Sunni Moslems who hated the Shiite Persians. Sultan Selim I (Yavaz) seized Tabriz, the capital of Persia. He then attacked the Mamluks who ruled Egypt and Syria, and proclaimed himself "Caliph of all Moslems." His son Suleyman Al-Kanouni (the Legislator) succeeded him and expanded his father's conquests. In 1534, he occupied Baghdad.

In the army of this monarch were Jewish officers and soldiers such as Moshe Hamon and David Ibn Yahia who were close to the Sultan. For four hundred years, the Turks, centered in Istanbul, ruled the area, aided by local governors *(Walis)* who were appointed under the decree of the Sultan. Most were Mamluks from the Balkans who made life miserable for minorities, especially the Jews.

In 1743, the plague broke out in Baghdad. The "Great Plague" *(Al-Waba Al-Kabir)* claimed tens of thousands of victims. Among the thousands of Jews who died were many teachers and rabbis. Thirty years later, another smaller plague raged through the city. It also killed Jews, including the three sons of the famed Rabbi Tsidka.

After the plague besieged the city of Basra for thirteen months, the MamIuks weakened and the Persians saw they were about to surrender. But Yaakov Ben Aharon Gabai, head of the Jewish community in the city, beseeched the Mamluks to maintain their position. He began to collect food in the surrounding villages and gave it to all residents so they could hold out. When the city surrendered, the Persian occupiers learned about the deeds of the Jews and took revenge.

The Jewish community had to acquiesce, and the response was increased cultural activities under the guise of prayer and religious ceremony. Religious seminaries, yeshivas and a Torah school were established, and books on religious law and commentary were printed. The head of the community assumed the status of president of the Diaspora. With that status, he was granted the authority to try cases, punish and imprison lawbreakers, and impose fines. Most of the presidents held government banking positions as Head Treasurers.

In 1830, Daoud Pasha conducted a rebellion against the central government in Istanbul and proclaimed the independent State of Iraq. The Sultan mobilized his troops and besieged Baghdad. During this long period, the plague broke out for the third time and took its toll again. The Tigris flooded and residents fled from the rising waters. When the gates of the city were opened the central army entered. In that period the Turks needed the services of the Jews in order to rule the land. They appointed heads of the community *(Ras Taifah)* under a decree from Istanbul. This arrangement was convenient for minorities, especially for Jews who were able to continue running the affairs of the Diaspora without interference or restriction.

Between the years 1860-1918, the community developed independent educational institutions as well as institutions for mutual assistance that included hospitals, clinics and an organization for professional training for the blind. Modern schools were established in Baghdad. The *Kol Israel Chaverim* (All Israelites are Brothers) organization established educational institutions in Baghdad, Basra, Mosul, Hillah and Kirkuk.

The next Wali, Madhat Pacha, was a reformer who allowed unlimited development of educational institutions. He also supported the establishment of health institutions by the Jewish community. Before Pacha, certain problems had arisen between the Jews and the authorities, which resulted in the flight of numerous families from Baghdad and Basra to Indian cities. Among those who fled were the Sassoons.

In this new era, individuals belonging to minorities such as Jews, Christians and Mandaeans (Shabaites) were exempt from military service in exchange for a fee *(Askaria)*, the amount of which was determined by a community committee. From the committee was appointed the Chief Rabbi, *"Hakham Bashi"* who was himself appointed by the Wali.

This state of affairs continued until the Young Turks movement emerged and ended the rule of Sultan Abd Al-Hamid. They proclaimed the new constitution, which was based on the principles of the French Revolution, namely: "liberty, equality and justice for all." As subjects of the empire, the Jews of Iraq benefited from the new rule. They elected a representative to the Parliament in Istanbul. The representative of the Jewish community, Yehezkel Sassoon, who had attended universities in Vienna, London and Paris, had a reputation for being a great fiscal reformer. This man became the adviser on economic affairs to the new regime at a time when the Jewish community in Iraq was 80,000 strong with unparal leled educational institutions.

Religious affairs (synagogues, slaughterhouses, *Mikveh* ritual baths and cemeteries) were run in the most efficient manner by the Baghdad

Community Center. The health and welfare institutions became famous in all the countries in the Middle East. High school graduates from the city went to Istanbul to further their education.

The Jewish community was allowed to run its affairs through the local and central community committees without the interference of the government. It established tribunals, a chain of butcher shops, synagogues, yeshivas, a seminary to train rabbis, ritual slaughterers, and performers of ritual circumcision. A modern central hospital named after Me'ir Elias was built in Baghdad in 1910.

Young Jewish men were able to attend military academies, and for the first time, Jews wearing the uniform of Turkish officers could be seen in Iraqi cities. It is noteworthy that in that era there was no record of ethnic discrimination.

Community institutions expanded, and for the first time, Jewish orchestras were formed. These orchestras performed at all official functions and special occasions.

World War I and the Arab Rule

World War I broke out in Europe in August 1914. Several weeks later, Turkey joined the war against England, France and Russia. Young men from Iraq, among them Jews, were drafted to fight in the war, and many of them never returned home.

The British reached an agreement with the Sharif of Mecca, Hussein Ben Ali, and the Arab revolt intensified. The British arrived from India, invaded the port city of Basra and pushed forward. The Wali proclaimed a military government in the country. Most of the food supplies that belonged to the Jews were confiscated. Institutions were also taken over for the benefit of the army. The Jews suffered until the British-Arab victory on March 11, 1917, when the British army entered the city of Baghdad. Turkey requested a cease-fire in October 1918, and Iraq was liberated.

The British sought people who were qualified to run the affairs of the state, and thus, hundreds of Jews were appointed to key positions: the railroad system, the port, the educational system, banking, customs, import-export and financial accounting. When the airports were built, it was mostly Jews who filled key department and surveying posts. During the consultations on selecting a king for Iraq, it was Yehezkel Sassoon who suggested appointing Faisal I as the first Iraqi monarch. To reciprocate, Sassoon was invited to run the country's economy as the first Economics Minister of the independent Kingdom of Iraq.

The Al-Kilani Revolt

The Arabs and Iraqis in particular were dissatisfied with limited independence. The supreme British governor, *Al-Mandoub Al-Sami,* had the last word on domestic and external affairs. Unrest began among Iraqi intellectuals. Revolts erupted and were harshly suppressed by the British quislings in Iraq. Numerous coup attempts were also quashed. With the death of King Faisal I and the rule of his son Ghazi I, nationalistic Iraqis' hopes were renewed as the young king showed signs of unhappiness with the agreement of 1930 which gave the British unlimited powers to direct Iraq's policies. In 1936, the pan-Arab revolt against the British began in Iraq, Egypt and Palestine.

In Iraq, the revolt assumed a more vigorous form as the unrest spread among the senior officers of the young army. This created the right

conditions for the rebellion of General Bakker Sidki, who was killed a year later.

The Iraqi people could not sit still in the face of two British military bases in their midst, Al- Habbaniya in the central region and Shaieba in the south. Hatred towards the English mounted to the point where students would deliberately cut class during English lessons. This hatred grew still stronger after the death of King Ghazi I. Official sources reported that he died in a traffic accident, but the Iraqis firmly believe Britain had a hand in his death.

In the interim, the King's uncle, Abd El-Ilah, was appointed to run the monarchy as a regent until Faisal 11 turned eighteen. Hatred towards the British continued to build. Leaders of the national movement in Iraq established the Al-Moutha Club in Baghdad for the working intelligentsia, originally as a literary center. But it rapidly turned into a factory, crystallizing a nationalist anti-British movement.

The Golden Rectangle

Activities of the movement among Iraqi officers quickly led to the formation of a group of senior officers who shared nationalistic views and approaches. The group was headed by four senior officers: Salah Al-Din Al-Sabbagh, Fahmi Said, Mahmoud Suleiman and the deputy Iraqi Chief of Staff El-Amine Zaki. These officers would meet in one of the barracks in the El-Rashid camp in the Baghdad area and publish a stenciled bulletin which they made sure was distributed to the entire office corps. "The Golden Rectangle," as this officers group was called, held numerous meetings with Arab exiles from Egypt, Syria and Palestine who shared their nationalistic views. El-Haj Mohammed El-Amine El-Husseini headed this group of exiles.

The influence of these officers spread far beyond the military barracks. Millions of students and their teachers, particularly high school students, joined the movement. Anti-British slogans appeared on the walls, and anti-British leaflets were distributed in the streets of the major cities. German and Italian radio stations in Arabic added still more fuel to the fire with announcer Younes Bahri of Radio Berlin heading the propaganda campaign. Up to that point, there were no violent acts against Jews or other minorities, but there were numerous anti-British demonstrations.

The influence of the group of officers continued to grow. Parallel to that, the influence of those who supported Britain or the moderates who favored neutrality waned.

Some see the victories of the German Field Marshall Erwin Rommel in North Africa where his forces were joined by 200,000 Italian troops as the factor that tipped the balance against the British. Others note that the setback suffered by British forces in North Africa caused some gloating in Iraq, but did not result in a generalized fascist orientation.

April First, 1941

Through their new ambassador in Baghdad, Sir Kinahan Cornwallis, the British began to pressure the Iraqi government to cut off relations with the Italians and also meet other demands raised from time to time by the British ambassador and by the Regent Abd El-Ilah. Some of the British demands were to allow the landing of British troops in Basra, to let them build military airports along a line connecting Mosul in the north and Basra in the south; and to build emergency warehouses for weapons and ammunition alongside these airports. They also demanded that the Iraqi

government deport from Iraq all nationalistic Arab exiles from Iraq and some 300 government workers of Syrian, Palestinian, Egyptian and Lebanese origin; and to restrain the Iraqi media (the press) to keep it from being swept by the anti-British wave. It was obvious that the British demanded too much and that these demands would lead to unrest already evident among the Iraqi intelligentsia and army officers.

On the first day of April 1941, the government was ordered by the Regent to debate the issue of cutting off ties with Italy. The matter was brought to the attention of the officers in the Al-Rashid camp and they invited Rashid Ali Al-Kilani to join them. After a lengthy discussion, they decided to reject the demands of the British and visit Abd El-Ilah in the Al-Rihab palace to demand his resignation as well.

When they arrived at the palace, however, they did not find Abd El-Ilah. He had escaped to the palace of his paternal aunt, Princess Salha, in Baghdad. When he learned about the course of events, he sought refuge in the American embassy and requested political asylum. He then had the opportunity to talk to the American ambassador, Paul Knabenshue who arranged for him to flee in the embassy car to the Al-Habbaniya airport.

The flight of the Regent caused a constitutional *quid pro quo* and paved the way for his opponents to form a national security council to run the country in his absence. They arrested Salih Jaaber and Mohsen Abu Tabik, to prevent them from alerting or mobilizing the tribes and from organizing a rebellion against the junta. The officers also deported Sharif Faouaz and Sharif Hussein to Jordan, both of whom had been accused of spying for Britain.

The King's Regent in the Port City of Basra

In Al-Habbaniya, the Regent busily made contacts with military officers who had supported him in Basra. A British plane flew him to the Shaieba airbase where several officers who supported the monarchy were waiting for him.

But the atmosphere in the streets was hostile to the King and to the British. When a British plane dropped leaflets against Rashid Ali and against the junta, high school students picked them up and set them on fire.

On April 13, 1941, the National Defense Council headed by Rashid Ali Al-Kilani was set up. Al-Kilani was born in Baghdad in 1882 and studied law, but practiced it only briefly, turning instead to politics where he formed with others *Al-Hizb Al-Likna* (The Brotherhood Party). He was a nationalist who, in 1925 was appointed Minister of the Interior. In 1933 Al-Kilani came Prime Minister but in 1935 he returned to the post of Interior Minister. In 1940 he was again Prime Minister. Kilani believed that, with Italian and German assistance, Iraq could once and for all get rid of its dependence on the British.

As noted, this council was set up following the unrest on the first day of April 1941, as the government was to debate, under the demand of the Regent Abd El-Ilah, the severing of diplomatic ties with the government of Italy.

Regent Abd Al-Ilah arrived in Basra in a British airplane. He was escorted by Ali Joudat Al-Ayoubi and other politicians who supported him. In Basra, the regional officer Salih Jaaber was waiting for them. Jamil Al-Midfai also followed the acting King to Basra. The Regent first turned the luxury hotel Shatt Al-Arab into his headquarters and made phone calls to several of his supporters. He attempted but failed to persuade senior

military officers to join a special British force which would attack Baghdad and overthrow the illegal council.

He then tried to form a lawful government, which would rule from the city of Basra, but he failed in this as well. When he feared that his location had been found, he got in touch with the director of the port, Mr. Wood, a British citizen, and asked for permission to stay at his house. Later, he was housed on the British destroyer Gold *Shebird* that was cruising the waters of Shatt Al- Arab. Upon his insistence, the British installed a radio transmitter on the ship and provided him with an Arab announcer, Anwar Moukhlis. But this had no positive impact. Discouraged, he flew to Palestine with his supporters.

First Attack against Jews

Basra is Iraq's second largest city, with a population of 30,000 Jews who made a living from import/export businesses, money changing, retailing, senior government, postal, airport and railway employment. These Jews resided in several neighborhoods that included El-Oshar, El-Seif, and also New Basra, next to Al-Oshar.

On April 12, a British military force landed in Basra. Regent Abd El-Ilah's supporters and sympathizers got in touch with Jewish leaders and told them Abd Al-Ilah wanted to meet with them. Most had already met the Regent at parties and banquets and at various events, so this request did not seem unusual.

The Jewish leaders took with them bouquets of flowers for Abd Al-Ilah and Jamil Madfai, but those who drove them dropped them off at the site where the British soldiers were concentrated. In addition, it was Saturday and the weather was hot; it was unbearable to stay indoors. As was their custom on Sabbaths, thousands of Jews went to El-Kurnish Street on the bank of Shatt Al-Arab and to the public parks where the flowers were in full bloom. The many cafés on the Kurnish were not far from the British army.

The photographs, which appeared in the Sunday papers and the accompanying news reports along with the BBC news in Arabic, announced: *"BASRA JEWS WELCOME BRITISH TROOPS WITH FLOWERS."* This created exactly the tension between the Muslims and Jews that the British desired.

On Sunday April 13, groups of angry Arabs youths set out to take revenge against the Jews, but several Moslem notables in Basra had prior information about the matter and took to the streets to calm things down. Later it was learned that the Regent Abd Al-Ilah was not in Basra at all and the matter was a provocation by his supporters. They wanted to bring about an ethnic war and give the British army a pretext to intervene.

More Troops

Tensions subsided somewhat in Basra. The British continued to disregard the stance of the Rashid Ali government, and on April 17 and 18 ' British troops, mostly Indian units, landed in the port of Basra. These forces seized key positions in the south. Some seized El-Makal and others were sent to Shaieba to paralyze the Iraqi military force encamped not far from there. On the 29th, additional forces landed, invaded the port area and seized the facilities. Another force took control of the electrical power stations. The Iraqi forces Himayat Al-Basra retreated towards El-Kurna, thus avoiding a pointless confrontation.

Then the events unfolded more vigorously. On May 7, an Indian unit of the British army consisting of Nepalese Gurkhas occupied the El-Oshar quarters in Basra and seized the building in which the Moustarfieh (regional

headquarters) was located. Suddenly, the Gurkha soldiers who were under British officers began to loot. Many shops in the commercial district of El-Oshar were broken into and looted, and then the soldiers turned to loot and plunder houses. There even were cases of attempted rape as well. Local residents, Jews and Moslems, came out with drawn pistols and old rifles and started to fire a deadly hail of bullets at the Gurkhas. Although the soldiers were equipped with Tommy Gun submachine guns and defeated the defenders, they were kept from invading more homes.

Later on, it was learned that the soldiers acted with the acquiescence and perhaps the blessing of their British commanders. Their goal was clear. They wanted to cause chaos, blacken the image of the new Iraqi regime and create a pretext for British military intervention. Fortunately the city notables of all ethnicities were able to repel the plots.

The Indian soldiers, especially the Gurkha units, were highly disciplined and have always acted like lowly slaves under their British masters. It can be concluded that this raiding and looting must have been instigated by an order from above.

The War That No One Wanted

Tension mounted. The government expressed its readiness to allow British forces to land in Basra, but only intermittently and in transit, without long stays in Iraq. The British ambassador, Sir Kinahan Cornwallis thought otherwise. He sent a telegram to his government saying there was no way to avoid military confrontation and overthrow of the illegitimate government of Rashid Ali. This government, which was formed on April 13, enjoyed a great deal of popularity not only in Iraq but in the entire Arab world.

Hence, there was no turning back, even if they wanted to. On April 29, Iraqi military units moved to the hills near the British air force base of Al-Habbaniya. By the 30th of April, these units were all around Al-Habbaniya. The British government issued a protest and argued that these steps constituted a declaration of war against Great Britain. The Iraqis argued that the Iraqi army was conducting maneuvers, which was in agreement with the 1930 Treaty.

The truth is that none of the members of the Rashid Ali Al-Kilani government wanted a confrontation, but on the other hand, they could not tolerate the insults against the honor of the Iraqi people. Had Great Britain coordinated its steps with the Iraqi government, without disregarding nationalistic sentiments, no one would have stopped it from having its forces passing through Iraq on their way to other destinations. As noted, the British instead followed the recommendations of their ambassador Cornwallis who was considered to be familiar with the Iraqi sentiments. But in fact, this man alone complicated matters even more until the war broke out.

One Shell

Daily demonstrations took place in the cities of Iraq. High school students were training to shoot weapons. Teachers wore officer uniforms, and there were premilitary organizations such as *Al- Kataib Al-Shabab*. [The Phalanx of the Youth]

All this electrified the Iraqi soldiers who were encamped around the British airbase of Al-Habbaniya. This was a very dangerous situation, but its continuation was even more dangerous. Since the Iraqis were waiting for a face-saving outlet and the British refused to grant it, it was clear that the

explosion had to come. One of the soldiers belonging to an artillery unit whose cannon was pointed at Al-Habbaniya accidentally fired a shell which exploded somewhere in the base without causing any damage. But the firing of the shell surfaced, and this was apparently what the British were waiting for. Two planes circled around the Iraqi troops and each one dropped two bombs.

It was then that the real but hopeless war began. On May 7, the British attacked the Iraqi army vigorously and caused numerous deaths. That day, a unit of Gurkhas of the British army in Basra occupied the Al-Oshar quarter and engaged in looting, robbery, and rape. After this attack, the Iraqi planes flew from the base and fired on the retreating Iraqi army.

On May 13, General Joe Kingstone's forces (Kingcol) crossed the Iraqi border on their way to Al-Habbaniya. On May 14, British airplanes attacked the airports in Syria. German airplanes in the airports were severely damaged. On May 17, German planes at the Mosul's airport were destroyed. Kingstone's forces reached their destination on the 18th of the month. Meanwhile, most of the leaders of the rebellion realized there was no point in fighting and thought about a cease fire, but it was too late. On the same day, under orders from General Sabbagh, Iraqi units blew up the dams on the Tigris River and brought about the flooding of fields from Falluja to Baghdad. The purpose of this action was to delay as much as possible the invasion of Baghdad by the British army, until a face-saving formula could be found that would prevent the fall of the Iraqi base in Falluja. But the British began an intense attack against Falluja on May 18, and caused heavy casualties among Iraqi soldiers.

The Second Blow

On May 19, soldiers of the Assyrian levies who were serving as career soldiers in the British army entered the city of Falluja and went on a rampage, killing, looting and raping, especially Jews. In his book *Peilut ha Tsiyonit be-Irak (The Zionist Activities in Iraq)*, Ha'Sifriyah Ha'Tsiyonit, Jerusalem, 1969), Hayyim Cohen argues that the Assyrians did this to avenge the massacre of their brethren in August 1923. But this is not convincing since the Assyrian soldiers were cowardly, obedient to their British commanders and boundlessly disciplined.

Therefore, they had to have the permission of the British officers. It is reasonable to assume that it was done under their order, as was the case when the El-Oshar quarter in Basra was pillaged by the Gurkha units who are known to be disciplined and obedient.

The commander of the forces that entered Falluja was none other than General J.W. Clark who was known to be exacting on the matter of troop discipline. In fact, the conquest of Falluja ended the war and the situation was resolved. The Iraqi soldiers had tried and failed twice to regain control of their country. The road to Baghdad was open to the British forces.

They began to move toward the capital city. On their way, they came across flooded fields. They quickly by-passed the flooded area and moved to the Chan El-Chari road going east. There they clashed with Iraqi troops. They overran and continued to advance to the outskirts of Baghdad. Another force, the Jordanian Legion headed by John Bagot Glubb *(Glubb Pasha)* advanced and passed through the El-Jezeira region, quickly crossed the Tigris, occupied E-Mashada and came close to the southern flank of Baghdad.

On May 29, most of the leaders of the rebellion escaped towards the Iranian border, and rumors were spread about the suicide of disillusioned politicians. But it turned out that these rumors were false. British airplanes

circled over Baghdad undisturbed and dropped leaflets calling on the public to stay calm. At the same time, government officials convened for a lengthy debate, but they did not reach any decision.

They were already on their way towards the Iranian border in the Ksar Shirin region in Northern Iraq when Rashid Ali and the Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Mohammed El-Amine El-Husseini suggested that the government be moved to the city of Al-Mansuria. As they were on their way, they received the information by radio that a meeting would take place in the town of Khanaqin, near the Iranian border.

Later that day, it was announced that Rashid Ali and his associates had fled to Iran. It may be worthy to note that Rashid Ali was able to send his wife and the rest of his family to Turkey, immediately after the Iraqi army failed to liberate Falluja. On that evening of the 18th, it was aired that the return of Prince Abd Al-Ilah was imminent and he was already on his way to Baghdad.

Cease-Fire

On Friday May 30 at s:10 AM an official cease-fire was declared. The affairs of the government in Baghdad were taken over by the Mayor, Arshad El-Umari, and by the Chief of Police. The British rejected all proposals to form a temporary government until the Regent's return. An argument broke out between supporters of the British, Jamil Al-Madfai and General Nouri El-Said. The British army of Kurdish soldiers which came from the Baghdad area awaited the order to spread out on the streets and establish order. But since there was no government and no Regent, the entry of the army in the capital was delayed until Monday May 2 at 11:00 AM when the order was received to intervene and establish the temporary government.

The Fateful Meeting

Most officers who took part in the rebellion escaped to Iran, headed by the four senior officers of the Golden Rectangle. In Teheran were over 700 who fled from Baghdad, among them Arab exiles from other countries who had been staying in Iraq as political refugees. Former Minister Younes Al-Shabawi did not flee. He proclaimed himself military governor and called upon Mayor Arshad Al-Umari and the Chief of Police and others to form a committee for the security of the country and especially Baghdad. Tension mounted in the city and it was clear that in the absence of a government chaos would prevail; thus it was wise for Shabawi to form this committee. Aware of the dangers looming over the minorities, he invited to his office Chief Rabbi Hakharn Sassoon Khaddouri and had a lengthy discussion with him. At the conclusion of the talk, he asked him to tell his community not to fear, that they were safe from danger. Al-Shabawi told Rabbi Khaddouri: "I would ask that for three days, the Jews not go outside of their homes unless it is absolutely necessary, until I take control of the situation and tensions subside."

The British Stop near the Capital City

As noted, Rashid Ali Al-Kilani and the members of his cabinet rallied in the town of Khanaqin, near the Iranian border. Every half hour, the news radio gave reports. The British forces came within one kilometer of the city and stopped; no one knows why. Younes Al-Shabawi did his best to maintain order in the country. He mobilized the youth brigades from the

Kataib Al-Shabab (who were under his command) to defend sensitive locations in the city. Later on, the men of the Kataib Al-Shabab were ordered to report to their bases and return their weapons.

The Committee for the Maintenance of Security placed the business district and the banks area under heavy guard. This area was largely frequented by Jews. Jews also lived in the prestigious neighborhoods of Al-Karda Charquia, Bab El-Shargui and Al-Batawin.

Radio stations run by the British, Al-Sharq Al-Adna (Radio Near-East) and the BBC continued to report about the imminent entry of the Regent Abdul-Ilah into the capital city and that thousand of Jews and others were planning to leave their homes to welcome him, as was the case when the British forces entered Basra. This managed to inflame Arab youths against the Jews. More enthused than anyone else was the Radio-Berlin Arabic announcer, Younes El-Bahri, who reported that "Jews from Palestine are fighting alongside the British against Iraqi soldiers near Falluja."

It is true that a small number of fighters from the National Military Organization, Ezel (Irgun Zvai Leumi), were in the Al-Habbaniya area for the purpose of committing acts of sabotage and gathering intelligence. These included David Raziel, Yaacov Meridor, Yaacov-Sika Aharoni and Yaacov Harazi.

On Friday, May 30, Younes Al-Shabawi also fled and the maintenance of law and order was left to Arshad El-Umari and the Committee for the Maintenance of Security. The Committee issued a declaration saying that any man who was in possession of an unlicensed weapon was obliged to turn it in at the nearest police station or else be penalized under the law. Many complied, and thousands of weapons were turned in at police stations. It was learned that the Regent Abd El-Ilah was at the Al-Habbaniya airbase. He had arrived directly after Falluja fell, returning from Palestine under the escort of a British officer.

The Massacre

Thursday May 29 and Friday May 30 were uneventful, but tension could be felt everywhere. On Saturday, groups of Jews went to the cafés where they would normally sit on weekends and holidays. These cafés were located along the boardwalk, on the banks of the Tigris River. Some Jews worked up the courage to go to the major streets. On their way, they ran into youths from the *Kataib Al-Shabab*, the youth brigades.

They began to provoke them with slogans such as *"Yaish Abu Naji!"*'(Long lives Abu Naji!); Abu Naji is the nickname given to the British. This enraged the *Kataib Al-Shabab* and fights broke out, but they did not turn into exchanges of fire.

Sunday June 1 was Shavuot. On this holiday, the Jews of Iraq visit the tombs of saints, such as the tomb of Ezra the Ha Soo Fair, in the south and the tomb of Yehezkel Ben-Buzi in central Iraq. In the center region, they visit the tomb of Ha'Cohen, as well as the tomb of the distinguished Rabbi Yosef Hayyim.

In the north, they visit the Tomb of Nahum El-Koush. As on all holidays, the Jews of Iraq dress up and visit their friends or go to the synagogue. To the youth brigades who were unfamiliar with Jewish holidays and celebrations, it appeared as if the Jews with their festiveness that year were gloating about the failure of the rebellion.

Moreover, it was announced on the radio that the regent Abd El-Ilah was about to return to Baghdad on that same day. The report told of the multitudes waiting to greet him on his way to the Palace Al-Rihab, including a major delegation representing the Jewish community of Iraq. In reality

the group consisted of no more than seven people. However this information further fueled the flames of hostility, and when the Jews returned to their homes, the youth brigades thought the Jews were returning from welcoming Abd El-Ilah. All these fights began on Sunday June 1, 194 1, although no weapons had been used.

On the same evening, it was learned that a group of rioters stopped a bus, removed the Jewish passengers, murdered one and fatally wounded a second. This event constituted the transition from unarmed fights to what followed. At 8:00 PM several shots could be heard in one of the residential areas populated by Jews, and subsequently, there was firing with automatic weapons.

On Monday June 2 at approximately 8:30 AM, two beige trucks entered El-Amin Street, a small street that connects Al-Rashid and King Ghazi Streets. Most of the residents were middle class Jews. The shops were mostly owned by Jews. The jewelers, tailors and grocers were almost all Jews. These trucks were painted in the color used by the British, Iraqi and Jordanian armies.

Some thirty individuals in military or police uniforms and carrying Tommy Guns (submachine guns) emerged from the trucks and opened fire on the locks of the shops and doors of the houses. When the mob on the street saw the police and the soldiers break the doors, they rushed inside the houses and the shops and began looting. Although they did not participate in the looting themselves, the soldiers and the police did shoot the people inside their homes.

The mobs that organized the looting and attacked Jewish homes were shouting slogans: *"Hada Al-Yom Li Kunna Naridah!"* (This is the day we have been waiting for!) Most of these were equipped with knives, switchblades and clubs. Those wearing the uniforms appeared to be directing the pogrom but did not touch any property. Afterwards, those in uniform were seen riding in their trucks toward other Jewish quarters.

Later that Monday, at 11:00 AM, large military forces arrived in Baghdad. The soldiers were all Kurds and the army split into units and set out to disperse the crowds while shooting at them. Many of the rioters were killed and the army managed to chase the rioters away. By 3:00 PM it was relatively quiet.

The wounded were taken to hospitals. There was a case at El-Majidiyah hospital, where the director delayed the admission of the Jewish wounded, but eventually the doctors in his hospital worked day and night to save the lives of those who were sent there. The director of the hospital, who was an arch-nationalist, was removed and lost his medical license. Eventually he left Iraq.

The authorities began to arrest those who were known for their pro-Germanic views, as well as German and Italian agents. Heads of the Jewish community made a list of casualties and the government began to collect the property that had been looted from the Jews. They piled it up in the police stations and parks and the victims were called to pick up their property. Some found all that had been taken from them, including mattresses in which much money was hidden, but most of the victims did not find their valuables, especially gold and silver items. During the riots, many of the Moslems rose to defend their Jewish neighbors. Many Jews also were able to defend themselves and repel the rioters.

The Victims

Killed: According to the name list prepared by the community, 104 people died.

Injured: The same list gives 650 injured, 80 of whom were only slightly wounded.

Missing: 16. Two were found later, so the number of deaths was between 118 and 120.

Rape: There were 10 cases on record, but the truth is difficult to ascertain as most families refrained from reporting the rapes, fearing it would damage marriage prospects.

Property Damage

Robbery: According to records of the community, 559 stores were robbed, each of whose assets totaled up to 1,000 Dinars. There were 29 shops in which the damages were above 1,000 Dinars. In one shop, the damage was as high as 30,000 Dinars. 890 houses were robbed.

The total number of casualties during the robberies and the looting was 2,300 families, each family averaging six members. Immediately after the riots died down, it was learned that the number of those killed when the crowds were dispersed was between 300 and 400, mostly males.

The government established a commission to study the reasons for the riots, the number of the victims, and to identify the guilty parties and prosecute them. The commission was required to submit its report and conclusions within a few days.

The community appointed a committee to take care of the families and orphaned children who were victimized, and support the families. Three days later, on Thursday June 5, the Jews began to go their jobs as usual and the police were directed to record and check on every complaint by the Jewish victims.

Who Was behind the Pogroms?

Yosef Me'ir, who was one of the most prominent activists in the underground Zionist movement in Iraq (code name was "Yehoshafat"), and who now works for the Defense Ministry of Israel attempted to find answers to the *Farhud* (Baghdad pogrom). In a book published by the Defense Ministry of Israel, *Me-ever la-midbar: ha'mahteret ha'halutsit be-Irak, (Road in the Desert,* Ma'arakhot, Tel Aviv, 1973), Me'ir wrote:

> There are those who argue that the pogroms against the Jews in Iraq were planned by the pro-Nazi elements, even before the revolt failed. In my view, this does not square with reality since:
>
> 1. Despite the absence of a lawful government, and despite the reports that the leaders of the revolt had already escaped, law and order were maintained for two full days.
> 2. When it was reported that the revolt failed, on the morning of Friday, May 30, the Moslem masses certainly did not know that the British army was postponing its entry into the capital, and it was not yet known when the King's Regent would return to Baghdad. Had the pogroms been planned ahead of time, the masses would have taken advantage of the situation to rob and kill, before the

British forces entered the capital, and before a lawful government was established.

3. The fact that the peace was not breached for two days and the business district, which is almost entirely owned by Jews, was not attacked even when the city was under the control of robbers and murderers, proves that the Committee for Internal Security that guarded the district was well in control of the situation.

4. There are numerous pieces of evidence that the British were fully aware that delaying the entry of their forces into Baghdad or postponing the establishment of a lawful government would open the city to robberies and murders. But, as the intelligence officer of the British troops put it, "it would have injured the prestige of our ally the King's Regent if it turned out that he returned with the aid of British bayonets." It was therefore necessary to suppress such an impression, and instead make it appear that the Regent returned as a savior who re-established law and order. Then an outside hand began to stir the pot. The vulnerable element was the Jews, and they were abandoned to be robbed and murdered so as to provide the appropriate pretext for the entry of the Regent in the capital. Since the riots ended at midnight, and since the Regent had not yet arrived in the capital, it became necessary to resume them, and they ended only when the Regent's loyal soldiers entered the capital.

The self-evident conclusion is that the pogroms were the result of late planning, and the only ones who would have benefited from this situation are the British and their allies, the Regent and his men.

Yosef Me'ir is indeed correct, in that the only ones who benefited from the events in Baghdad were the British, and if Yosef Me'ir is saying this here, it can be assumed that his assertions are based to some extent on the documents, which must have been collected in the archives of the Israeli Defense Ministry itself.

It is reasonable to assume that the Israeli Ministry of Defense has documents which pointed to the British being responsible for organizing the riots, or that they were indirectly behind them.

The Follower of the Armenian Preacher

Long before Yosef Me'ir immigrated to Israel and contemplated the publication of this book, I accidentally met a man who revealed to me that the British were behind the riots. In the years 1945-46, a young Armenian with a preacher's appearance named Afak became famous in the Iraqi media, claiming he had supernatural powers to cure patients with otherwise incurable diseases.

Afak looked like the pictures of Jesus of Nazareth and communicated with his followers in a manner similar to Jesus. He had arrived in Baghdad on his way to Buenos Aires, Argentina, invited by a rich manufacturer of alcoholic beverages. This man had a son who suffered from an incurable disease. He had given up on doctors and had invited Afak to treat his son.

Most of Afak's preaching was for the Armenians to return to the born-again (Soviet) Armenia. Among the young men who were drawn to him was Michael Timosian, a Baghdad resident who was working as a registered male nurse in one of the city's state hospitals. On his way to Armenia, Timosian reached the city of Abadan in southern Iran, where he found hundreds of members of his ethnic group working for the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company. After much thought, he decided to stay in

Abadan, and for the time being, he put on hold his project to return to the born-again homeland. Timosian purchased a phony Iranian identity card, went to the company's hospital and was promptly hired, especially since he was fluent in English and Farsi, in addition to Arabic.

I had met him at the Iranian Club, run by the company, and while we were discussing the role of the British in the events in Palestine and the traditional method of creating intra-ethnic hostilities they employed, he told me the following story:

The Two Speechless Wounded Men

On June 2, 1941, the day when the massacre of Baghdad Jews began, I was on duty at the hospital for twenty-four straight hours. In the evening, a large number of injured were brought to the hospital, most of whom were Jews, but there were others as well. A well-known Jewish doctor headed the department where I worked, and that evening, we were quite anxious because most of the Jewish female and male nurses did not show up to work. At first, we thought it was due to the Jewish holiday, which lasted two days, but we later realized that some of them (or their relatives) were among the casualties. Thus, the doctor and I had to do the work of a large medical team.

Of all those wounded, I was especially interested in two men whose conduct did not follow local custom and who drove us crazy. The two patients complained about aches, one of them having been hit by a bullet in his shoulder, and the other by a bullet in his right knee. We bandaged them after the doctor removed the bullets, but they did not allow us to change their clothes, which were soaked with dried blood. Furthermore, they refused to tell us anything, and pretended to be speechless. Since most people who are mute are also deaf, I checked their sense of hearing, and it turned out that they could hear very well.

This made the doctor suspicious and he told me to keep an eye on them. In order to pacify them, we injected them with sedatives, and while they were sleeping, we changed their soiled clothes. We discovered that one of them had hanging around his neck an identification plaque (dog tag) of the type used by the British troops. The second one had tattoos and a strange Indian script on his right arm, as well as the symbolic sword of the Nepalese Gurkhas.

In previous years, Timosian had worked as a registered nurse with the British army at the Al-Habbaniya airbase. He was familiar with the lives and customs of Indian and Australian units under the command of the British army.

Timosian told the doctor what he saw and the doctor came to see the strange tattoos and the dog tags. He decided to do something, but there was no one to contact. The reports about the escape of Rashid Ali's men and the massacre were heard from other radio stations and were received with grave concern.

The British, according to the reports people gave us, had reached the outskirts of Baghdad but moved no farther, and the Armenians such as myself began to worry that we would be next in line after the Jews.

On Tuesday morning, my replacement arrived and told us fantastic stories about what went on in the Jewish areas of Baghdad. I left with the Jewish doctor, escorted by policemen who were called by the management. I was supposed to return the following evening. On returning to work with my bicycle that evening, I was somewhat late because the streets were full of police officers who were checking everyone.

I apologized to my friend, a male nurse like myself, and prepared to start my shift. Meanwhile, a few female Jewish nurses came back to work. As soon as I put on my white uniform, I went to the room where the two speechless men were supposed to be lying, but to my utter surprise, their beds were empty. I ran after my replacement who had not yet left the hospital, and asked him what had happened to the two men. He told me:

> In the early hours, a British officer came to the hospital accompanied by a sergeant and two Indian Gurkha soldiers. They began to circulate among the buildings of the hospital. When they reached the ward, the Indian sergeant approached the two injured men and began to talk to them. They were not dumb as we previously thought. They immediately saluted the officer, covered themselves with sheets and left with the squad. I asked for papers and for signatures on forms, but the officer waved his automatic weapon at me and I fled.

The story ends here. Timosian repeated it to me a number of times. I immigrated to Israel, and Timosian went to Armenia; I nearly forgot this strange story. In 1981, forty years after the events of 1941, the public was allowed to look at the archives of the British Foreign Office. I immediately asked a friend to search for documents regarding the revolt of Rashid Ali, thinking he may find evidence of Britain's role in the massacre. The friend looked and dug deeply, including top secret documents, but when he inquired about documents pertaining to Rashid Ali's revolt and the massacre, those in charge pointed to two safes, one of which was marked "To open to the public in 1992" and the other in 2017. This prohibition made me very curious.

Not surprisingly, I began to investigate, since two of my friends were murdered during those days in the 1941 massacre. On May 7 and 8, 1941, after the British army occupied the El-Oshar quarter in Basra and the business district, orders were given to loot and rob. Hayyim Cohen has confirmed the active role of the British officers in these events in page 163 of his book *Pe'ilut HaTsiyonit be-Irak* (The Zionist Activities in Irak). Jerusalem: Ha'Sifriyah Ha'Tsiyonit, 1969:

> These were loyal and disciplined units, and if they took part in robbery, it must have been under orders from above, and not just the whim of some individuals. They blew off the locks of the shops with their weapons.

David Kimche Reminds the British of an Unpleasant Forgotten Past

In November 1982, David Kimche, the Director General of the Foreign Ministry, went into the lion's den of the well-known British Institute for International Affairs, Chatham House, where veteran Pan-Arabist statesmen are based. He took advantage of the anniversary day of the Balfour Declaration to remind them of long-forgotten things, of how hypocritical they were when Jews were the victims of pogroms in Arab countries in the 1940s, when the British ruled these countries.

Sir Harold Bailey (former assistant to Foreign Minister Ernest Bevin and former ambassador to Cairo), Lord Christopher Mayhew (a card-carrying anti-Zionist and emphatic pro-Arab), Sir Roberts (Bevin's deputy), and several other senior officials came to greet David Kimche.

Kimche lectured about the goals of the operation "Peace in Galilee." He told about the shock felt by the Israeli public when it was learned about the massacre at the Beirut refugee camps, and how it was decided to establish a state commission of inquiry.

In response to hostile questions, Kimche reminded his audience that in September 1970, the Jordanian Legion killed some 20,000 members of the PLO, and he could not recall any commotion caused by this massacre. He squared historical accounts with the British and reminded them of the following events:

> In May-June 1941, there was a bloody pogrom against the Jewish population of Baghdad, as British units were stationed at the entrance of the city. The Jews were murdered by Arabs of Al-Kataib Al-Shabab and also by Gurkha units of the British army. During the riots, some 500 Jews were murdered, 1,000 were injured and 1,300 stores were broken into. It was not until seven weeks after the pogrom that initial details were reported by the British embassy and the Foreign Office.

A similar massacre took place in Aden, Yemen, in December 1974, when some 70 Jews were murdered, and hundreds of houses were looted and destroyed. In this instance, the Foreign Office appointed an investigator after a while, but no conclusions were drawn from the inquiry.

Without the British army and police doing anything to save Jewish lives, more than 130 Jews were brutally murdered for four days in the streets of Tripoli, Libya, in November 1945. Kimche mentioned that he was unaware of any state commissions of inquiry that were established at the time, nor was he aware of any murderers punished or reparations paid to the victims.

FIVE

The Zionist Movement in Iraq

Iraq and Palestine have always had close ties, especially in the trade. Hundreds of trucks filled with Jaffa oranges and eggs reached Iraq from Palestine. Trucks left Iraq loaded with dates as well as other products. Travelers of all faiths went back and forth between the two countries, whether for commerce or to visit Moslem, Christian or Jewish holy sites.

Only four or five Jews in all of Iraq knew about the existence of World Zionism, as a result of a meeting of Iraqi King Faisal I with Dr. Chaim Weizmann. However, the meeting was merely an expression of an aspiration, not activism. Later, a library called Ach-Aber was established in Baghdad. It had books in Hebrew on the history of Judaism in the world, but not on Zionism. This library attracted a large group of young educated Jews who found ways to hold evenings of culture and tradition, especially during the Jewish holidays.

In the late 1920s, Zionist activists visited Iraq, among them Yitzhak Ben-Zvi and Eliezer Kaplan. In the early 1930s, more activists began to arrive from Palestine under the guise of teaching Judaism. One of these was Reuven Zislani (Shiloach) who was later active in Israeli intelligence and among the members of the delegation that met with King Abdullah. Later Zislani was appointed Israel's ambassador in Washington. The Institute for Middle East studies at Tel Aviv University is named after him (Shiloach Institute). Yet, all these activities failed to move Iraqi Jews to Palestine.

During that period, the number of young persons of Iraqi origin who settled in Palestine was less than 25. Some of these were young men who did not want to serve in the Iraqi army. By law, all Iraqi men were obligated to serve in the army for two years, unless their families paid "Al-Badal," a 50 Dinar fee which entitled one to exemption from full army duties. All that was then needed was to undergo a brief training. But the situation changed about a year after the revolt of Rashid Ali Al-Kilani and after the massacre of Baghdad Jews.

Shabab El-Indukh

The massacre of Baghdad created a deep trauma among Iraqi Jews and permanently scarred the good relations and mutual trust that had prevailed between Jews and non-Jews in this land ever since the Babylonian exile – and indeed long before. There were numerous reasons

for this crisis, but most noteworthy is the fact that the great majority of Iraqi Jews and Moslems did not know the British were behind the massacre.

While exploiting the atmosphere that resulted, the British created chaos and instilled the idea that only a pro-British government was able to restore order in the country. The few who suspected this were not certain, as they had no hard evidence. Therefore, it was natural to find Jewish youths who organized for the purpose of self-defense and acquired firearms. And so, it happened that one day, in August 1941, two months after the massacre, leaflets typewritten in Arabic and stenciled were distributed. The leaflets were short and to the point. Their authors expressed concern for the Jews who were defenseless in the face of danger, and for what they had gone through during the revolt and the massacre.

The leaflets ended with a call to organize in self-defense and to purchase protective weapons. It is interesting to note that Palestine was not mentioned in the leaflet, nor was Zionism nor Aliyah (the emigration from the country to Palestine). Some youths, especially high school students from Shamas high school, and others heeded the call. But the more educated Jews who tended to move to the left tried to explain to those who responded to the leaflet that Iraq is "our homeland" and bears no responsibility for what happened; that the Iraqi people are also victims. Hadn't thousands of their sons been killed in a war that was not theirs?

By the end of the year, the youths had forgotten all about the leaflet and its contents. But the Zionist leaders in Palestine had not. One of the leaflets landed in the hands of a Jewish sailor from Admiral Andrew Cunningham's troops who were in transit in Baghdad. He brought the leaflet to leaders of the Jewish agency.

Weeks later, the Pioneer Department of the Jewish Agency decided to send M. Khaddouri to Iraq. Khaddouri was an Iraqi Jew who had come to Israel several years earlier. After his report the Pioneer Department sent other emissaries, including Chaim Sireni (Enzo). Sireni was killed two years later in Italy. Also sent were Shemariahu Guttman, a member of Kibbutz Giveat Brenner, Shaul Avi-Gur, Monia Meridor and others. These emissaries established the foundations of an underground Zionist movement in Baghdad. Later, after preparing a framework of activists and training instructors in the Hebrew language and Zionist history, branches were opened in Basra, Hillah, Diwaniya, Arbil and Kirkuk.

These first emissaries went back to Palestine and were replaced by others. Textbooks were brought over from Palestine by Jewish soldiers or by employees of the Solel-Bone Company, which had been selected to perform various jobs for oil refineries in Abadan, in southern Iran. This construction company, owned by Zionists, had brought 400 workers from Palestine, most of whom were technicians and accountants. As early as 1942, in the center of the Bawardah neighborhood, the company set up a social club for its employees as well as a large dining hall with modern equipment that could seat up to 500 people.

Some of Solel-Bone employees were activists in the Zionist movement and from time to time went on missions to Iraqi cities bringing books, newspapers or other items. Later they brought weapons parts to be assembled in the homes of activists in Baghdad. Among those activists who served as a liaison between the Zionist movement in Israel (then Palestine) and the Movement in Iraq, was Max Beinit who committed suicide in a Cairo jail in 1954. He had gone to Egypt on an intelligence mission and was arrested following the capture of his band, which was carrying out acts of sabotage in Egyptian cities.

A Multi-Tentacled Octopus

The underground Zionist movement in Iraq was an octopus with many tentacles. Each of these tentacles or branches was linked to a center. The Zionists coordinated branch activities through center meetings where they were proportionally represented. The largest branch of the Movement was Ha'halutz.

Ha'halutz

The task of this branch was to educate its members in practical Zionism. They learned about the pioneer settlements in Palestine, Zionist history, the Zionist colonization movement in Palestine, the Labor movement, and the Hebrew language. Members were also trained to acquire professional skills. Female members were trained to be nurses, seamstresses or teachers. The young men were trained to be metal workers, electricians, machinists, woodworkers or tailors. It was difficult to train people for agricultural work under the circumstances.

Ha'halutz held annual seminars throughout Iraq, particularly in those places where it had branches and where the membership met the minimum requirements. There were weekly or monthly lectures on current affairs, debates on political and social issues, trips on the occasion of the Lag Ba'omer holiday or Passover, Shavuot, etc. They taught Hebrew, patriotic and movement songs. Ha'halutz had its own chorus that gave performances at times and it was responsible for bringing textbooks from Israel via Iran. It also had a printing shop and typewriters as well as stencil machines for duplicating propaganda pamphlets such as "Socialist Zionism" written in Arabic by Yosef Me'ir (Yehoshafat).

The duplicating machines made copies of the leaflets the Ha'halutz distributed on the eve of Israel's independence day. Ha'shura trainees delivered these leaflets to all Ha'halutz branches, synagogues and religious schools. They were written in Arabic.

Ha'halutz ran courses for instructors and also gave tests and grades in the subjects taught. The best trainees were usually selected for the instructor's course. The first seminar was given in late 1942 and the last one in late 1950, prior to the large exodus to Israel. Academic standards in the seminars and courses were among the highest, according to the testimony of the emissaries. Most trainees were educated young men and women from the middle and lower strata.

Ha'shura

Ha'shura was the liveliest of the branches of the Zionist movement in Iraq. It defended the Iraqi Jews during the massacres. Already in 1941, Jewish youths who were appalled by the extent of the massacre when Rashid Ali Al-Kilani's regime fell apart began to purchase personal weapons, with or without permits. But most did not know how to use these weapons. The initial organization had no broad defense goals either. Gradually emissaries from Israel saw to it that the members were trained in using weapons, assembling explosives, taking apart weapons and cleaning, maintaining and storing them. As Ha'shura grew in numbers and branches, the need for weapons increased, as did the number of courses it taught.

When members completed the courses, they learned how to use hot weapons and live ammunition. Ha'shura saw to it that weapons were accumulated and distributed according to the need and concentration of

Jews in the major cities of Iraq, such as Basra, Baghdad, Hillah, Kirkuk, and Mosul. In most cases, the weapons were stored in the houses of members or commanders. Ha'shura also saw to it that activists had communication codes.

The cities of Iraq and their major avenues were given Hebrew names. Thus Baghdad became "Tel Aviv" and its main thoroughfare, Al-Rashid Avenue, became "Allenby Avenue." Ghazi Street became "Hertzl Street."

The trainees learned the fundamentals of first aid, how to use radio equipment, read topography, maps and much more. In the headquarters of Ha'shura, usually consisting of top trainees, there were regional commanders headed by the Israeli emissary in charge of Ha'shura. Ha'shura and all of its branches were often in a state of partial or full alert, under orders from the center, which in turn was acting on the basis of decoded information regarding the political situation and the expected reactions towards the Jews. Every Israeli action against an Arab state required full alert for fear of a backlash by the Moslem masses in the streets of Iraq.

Ha'aliyah

Ha'aliyah (immigration to Israel) consisted of two branches that worked closely together. The first branch, which handled the illegal immigration, was always active and used to be the only branch of immigration. However, since the law on giving up Iraqi citizenship was ratified, this institution split into two branches, the first the open branch, and the second, the hidden one.

The first branch actively cooperated with the institutions of the Jewish community in Baghdad. It worked according to an agreed-upon policy, since the number of workers and activists on each side was set by this policy. A joint committee determined the list of prospective immigrants and the order of their departure under agreement between the representatives of the community and the leadership of Ha'aliyah. There were various fractions between the parties, and at times, they reached the point of threatening to stop the flights. In the end however, they reconciled their differences quietly, without the Iraqi government becoming aware of what was going on.

The institution was headed by an emissary of the Immigration Institute of the Jewish Agency in Israel whose job was to coordinate between the immigration institutions and immigration activities in Iraq.

All this was done through the office in Tehran, the Iranian capital where there was a major Israeli mission albeit unofficial, on embassy row, near the Kuwaiti embassy. Ha'aliyah took care of transporting the candidates for immigration, giving them shelter in such places as Jewish schools, synagogues, inexpensive hotels or Jewish homes. They took care of paperwork, of bribing the release of those under arrest or in prison. Ha'aliyah acted as a liaison between the Iraqi government offices and the Immigration Institute in Israel, and for a fee, they were also responsible for forwarding money and jewelry to the Jews in Israel.

Ha'aliyah also took care of airplane tickets for those families who were left penniless, after the breadwinners among them were fired when they gave up their Iraqi citizenship. The illegal branch of Ha'aliyah was in charge of arranging the immigration, through Iran, of those persecuted by the Iraqi police, or those who had to serve in the army. High school graduates were exempted from military duty but had to enroll in an officers academy. The illegal Ha'aliyah branch as well as the entire Ha'aliyah institution were headed by an emissary from Israel whose powers also included supervising

all branches of the Zionist movement in Iraq, including Ha'shura and Ha'modieyin.

Ha'modleyin

Ha'modieyin was the smallest branch of the underground Zionist movement in Iraq, but given the number of emissaries who were active at any time in this branch, it would seem as though this was the most important one. Ha'modieyin ('intelligence' in Hebrew) dealt with gathering information on the movement of the Iraqi army in the cities, military bases and their location; airplanes, tanks (as they were spotted from the distance) in the military bases, and military vehicles. They even gathered information about the uniforms of the Iraqi soldiers, and relations between soldiers and their commanders. Most information was gathered from official sources in the local press, and in particular, in the army weekly, where one could find information on newly acquired weaponry, new training methods and changes in the organization and composition of the military units.

Ha'modieyin was already active in Iraq during World War II, when Me'ir Schling (Me'ir Shilon) came to Baghdad and stayed at the Semiramis, a wellknown hotel. Within days of his arrival in Baghdad, an employee from the landscaping department in Baghdad handed him maps of military significance. I first heard about an intelligence branch within the Zionist movement from attorney Yosef Basri who was a guest at our home when he was on his way back from Tehran to Basra. He confided in me that his mission had nothing to do with immigration or defense, but rather with gathering information.

Given the type of information collected by his branch, it seems that the destination of this information was the Israeli intelligence services and not the Zionist movement in Iraq. This was indeed confirmed in 1951 by the confessions of Yehuda Taggar and Robert Henry Rodney to their Iraqi interrogators. Ha'modieyin, however, had another mission; namely to gather information needed by those in charge of immigration in Iraq. Due to the changes that had occurred in the past several years, when Mordechai Ben-Porat came to Baghdad as emissary of the Israeli Immigration Institute, he could not find his way around, despite the fact that he had left Iraq only six years before. He requested the assistance of Ha'modieyin in order to be able to get oriented. Ha'modieyin was dismantled immediately after the arrest of the emissaries who worked in its fold: Yehuda Taggar, Robert Henry Rodney and Yosef Basri.

Rodney was given a short prison sentence. Taggar received a life sentence but was released after the coup of Abd El-Karim Kassem, in 1958. Basri was put to death by hanging, along with his Ha'shura partner Shalom Salih Shalom. By way of Iran, Ha'modieyin men processed the information that was gathered and sent to Israel through agents who were active in the illegal immigration branch.

Osbat Mukaphahat Al-Sahyonia *(The League to Combat Zionism)*

In 1945, when World War II ended with the victory of the Allies (Russia, America and Great Britain), tensions in Iraq eased and the youth began to organize in political parties according to their opinions. The Jews, especially those who were educated, chose the leftist parties with a few moving to the Zionist underground, which was formed immediately after the massacre, on June 1, 1941.

In September 1945, a group of young Jews met and discussed the fate of Iraqi Jews, given the situation that emerged in the aftermath of the war. The massacre of June 1941 was also considered, and whether Zionism and immigration to Palestine were appropriate responses to the plight of the Iraqi Jews. After many hours of debate, the group reached the following conclusions:

1. The Iraqi Jews, who were accustomed to life together with their brethren of other religions
2. With regard to the massacre (called the Rashid Ali massacre), although it was carried out by inflamed Iraqi youths, it was agreed that it was the British who directed it. Those present provided evidence of this.
3. Iraqi Jewry has had a history spanning centuries in this land and has and will continue to contribute its share to the progress and development of the Iraqi state, for the benefit of all its residents and citizens.
4. Zionism is a product of imperialism and was established to serve the same, in all its forms and variations, as well as a small number of Jews whose interests coincide with those of imperialism. Therefore, it is just, honest and patriotic to take action against the Zionist movement.
5. It is appropriate to form a league to combat Zionism and request that the government grant permission to form such a league and publish an organ which will be named after it, in which the members and sympathizers could express their views.
6. We will send a delegation to Regent Abd El-Ilah and inform him about these resolutions.

This organization was formed at the beginning of 1945, as the citizens of Iraq felt that World War II was nearing its end with a smashing victory over the Axis powers (Nazi Germany, Italy and Japan). It was clear that the Zionist movement would take advantage of the sympathy of public opinion in the aftermath of the holocaust and carry out its plans to establish a Jewish State in Palestine.

The league leaders understood that establishing a Zionist State in the very heart of the Arab world would serve the interests of imperialism and the Jewish bourgeoisie, which for generations had been the ally of imperialist nations, such as Turkey, Great Britain and America. The manifesto of the league follows below. A copy was submitted to the Iraqi Ministry of the Interior in order to obtain permission to organize.

League to Combat Zionism

The founders:

1. Salim Menashe
2. Nissim Yehezkel Yehuda
3. Masrour Salih Kattan
4. Ibrahim Nejjai
5. Yaakov Masri
6. Me'ir Yaakov Cohen
7. Yaakov Yitzhak
8. Moshe Yaakov

We have determined that Zionism is a peril for Jews and Arabs alike. It is an imperialist, exploitative movement, which strives to accumulate advances and profits for its leaders even if the price is the lives of Jews wherever they may be. (Baghdad, Iraq, September 12, 1945)

A delegation from the League to Combat Zionism left for the Al-Rihab Palace to meet Regent Abd El-Ilah. (Baghdad, October 17, 1945)

According to press reports, the delegation found Abd El-Ilah receptive and they felt a degree of encouragement. (Baghdad's newspapers, October 18-19, 1945)

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The founders of the League to Combat Zionism submitted an application to the Interior Ministry for a permit to hold a rally in protest of the Balfour Declaration. (Baghdad, October 24, 1945)

The Iraqi ministry considered the application of the League to Combat Zionism to hold rallies, and rejected it. (Baghdad, November 2, 1945)

A mass rally against the Balfour Declaration was held by the League to Combat Zionism, the offspring of Imperialism.

The government's reply to the League's application for a permit:

These people (the applicants) have no leg to stand on in society, and do not have the skills to lead such an important association, not to mention that most hold communist views. The activities of these people appear to be nothing but communist activities under the guise of a struggle against Zionism.

–––– Report of the Director of the Special Political Department of Criminal Investigations Baghdad, June 19, 1946.

The Secret Meeting at El-Rihab Palace

In June 1946, the Minister of the Interior telephoned the Chief of Police and asked him to instruct the Director of the Special Department (CID), that investigated domestic political matters, and whose job was to monitor subversive activities against the government. The CID was similar to the Israeli Mossad. It planted agents in all Iraqi political parties, including the underground communist party. One of these agents was Malik Saif, a police officer with the rank of superintendent who worked for many years inside the party. He gathered a great deal of information including a current list of party members. In late 1948, after careful preparations, the police arrested all the activists. After brutally torturing them, they sent them to jail for the rest of their lives.

It was the CID that investigated the Jewish activities inside leftist parties and submitted a report to the Chief of Police and Minister of Interior. The report included the leanings of every Jewish young man in these parties, as well as the League to Combat Zionism. The task was to complete the report about the leftist parties and the League to Combat Zionism, and to hold a conference at Al-Rihab Palace.

On a morning in early June 1946 one could feel the presence of the Royal Guard in the Palace. By 10 AM, the assembly hall was full of secret policemen, the staff Special Department, the Minister of the Interior and his adviser (a British agent employed as a technical adviser), the Chief of Police and the Director of the CID. The attendants reviewed the report and looked at the summary, which was to be submitted to the Prime Minister and to the King's Regent. At noon, the guests were invited to lunch, and after they finished eating, they returned to their respective offices. Only

the Interior Minister, the Chief of Police and the British adviser did not resume business as usual.

At 2 PM the King's Regent arrived, accompanied by the Prime Minister. Those present stood up, bowed and were the last to sit down. Then, the Interior Minister was asked to state briefly the conclusion of the investigation. The King's Regent listened and seemed concerned about the extent of Jewish participation in anti-government activities. The King's Regent told about his meeting with the members of the League to Combat Zionism during the previous month of October, and argued that they were worse than red communists. He said: "They told me there is no alternative to a guerrilla war to throw the British out of Iraq. How can one believe that Jews would stoop this low?"

The King's Regent asked the Prime Minister if there was any way to remove the Jews from the country. The Prime Minister responded that there was no way legal or practical to do so, and that such action would turn the entire population against the government. "How can we explain this? By saying that they wanted to get rid of the British? All Iraqi want that!"

The Regent proposed something else: "I am going to a meeting with my uncle, His Majesty the Emir Abdullah. Perhaps he will be able to find a solution with his friends in the Jewish Agency."

As the Prime Minister and King's Regent were leaving the room, the Prime Minister said: "Saydi (Sir), try to meet with Elias Effendi (Eliahu Sassoon), I believe that he can find a solution to the problem. They will arrange in Amman for a meeting between the two of you. Good luck, Sir!"

A Meeting In Jerusalem

Raphael Souzin was a Jew from Jerusalem who held many meetings with Arab representatives and especially with Iraqi ambassadors and Hashemite princes. The Hashemites, a family clan descending from Prophet Mohammed, ruled the Kingdoms of Iraq and Jordan. Souzin's home in Jerusalem was a meeting place for representatives of the Jewish Agency and emissaries from Arab states. The Iraqi envoy, Shaker El-Wadi who later became a minister in the government of Nouri El-Said, was among Souzin's regular guests. Representing the political department of the Jewish Agency were Eliahu Sassoon (Elias Effendi), Reuven Zislani (Shiloah) and Walter Eytan.

From the Jordanian royal family was Prince Mona El-Fouaz who conveyed Emir Abdullah's messages. (Until June 1, Jordan was an Emirate. It was thereafter proclaimed a Kingdom.) At the end of June 1946, Prince Mona El-Fouaz and a relative from the Iraqi royal family came to visit Raphael Souzin. Souzin was used to their visits and showed no surprise when they asked him to arrange for them a meeting with Elias Effendi (Eliahu Sassoon).

A few days later, the meeting took place. Reuven Shiloah, Eliahu Sassoon and two other men represented the Israeli side from the Arab Section of the Political Department of the Jewish Agency. The meeting lasted two hours. Among matters discussed were the future relations between Jews and Arabs in Palestine, when and if the British leave, and whether the Jewish Agency held influence over the Jews of Iraq. Sassoon did not reveal that Israeli agents were secretly operating in Baghdad, but said there was only a small amount of influence by the Sephardim Rabbinate.

Sassoon felt pleased when the Iraqi guest conveyed Nouri El-Said's greetings (the two had met in Jerusalem's King David Hotel, when El-Said and Abd El-Ilah were in Palestine at the end of April 1941, after the Rashid

Al-Kilani revolution broke out) and mentioned their talk with Ben-Gurion and Sharett at the same hotel. (The topic had been an exchange of population: Iraqi Jews against the Arabs of Palestine.) This meeting was not the last one, since no agreement was reached, but it laid the foundations for further meetings between more senior officials.

In June 1947, there was another meeting in which the King's Regent participated. The exchange of populations was discussed again. Another meeting took place that same month in Souzin's place. This time, the parties reached a tentative agreement to partition the country, regarding the future of its Arab population. Yaakov Shimoni from the Arab Section of the Political Department of the Jewish Agency attended this meeting. At this last meeting, they talked less about exchanging the populations, and more about dividing up the land.

The Jews of Iraq were also mentioned. Participants at this meeting reported to their organizations and their superiors, hoping they would soon meet to complete the agreement and turn it into a permanent one. But at the same time, the UN was debating the future of Palestine. Resolution 181 of November 29, 1947 temporarily blew the wind off their sails.

The author has used the following sources:

1. Conversations with Eliahu Sassoon, Isreli Minister of Police.
2. *Bama'achara*, October 1981 (# 251).

Nouri El-Said Does Not Give Up

In May 1947, humanity the world over celebrated the victory over the Nazi beast. For the Russians, it was a double and triple victory, even though Russia had lost over 20 million men. They had many triumphs to their credit, such as the socialist government in China, as well as enormous victories in Europe, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Romania, Hungary, Albania and East Germany, all of which became an integral part of the Eastern Bloc.

The Americans who had ended up fighting in this war because they had to and whose stake was minuscule compared to the British or the Russians (not on the battlefield, but rather in commerce) took advantage of their "temporary" presence in the East and Europe to take over the markets that had previously been the domain of the Germans or the Japanese. But they did not settle for these gains and began to undermine the influence of Great Britain, which by then had diminished.

At the same time, Britain was attempting to rebuild itself. It was also desperately fighting to maintain its last colonies in Asia and Africa. The Americans penetrated every place where the British had been, and especially those countries that smelled of oil. The British pressed their last quislings to slow down the Americans, but to no avail: the British were hated so deeply, any alternative appeared better to the peoples of the Middle East. Nouri El-Said, the old quisling of the British, was ordered to change the British-Iraqi covenant of 1930 into a military alliance, but the atmosphere was not ripe for these plans. Nouri El-Said started to do all he could to get the proposal ratified for an alliance with Britain.

Nouri El-Said's confidence was due to the fact that the leaders of the communist party (Yosef Zalman Yosef, Hasin Shabib, Ibrahim Nejjai and Yehuda Sadik) were behind bars. They had been arrested one Saturday in the house of a left wing leader named Daoud ElSayeg. The secret service officer Malik Saif infiltrated the underground communist party and reported to his superiors about the moves of these leaders. The leaders of other left-wing parties were also targeted, including El-Watan A]-Dimocrati, a social-democratic party similar to the Israeli Mapai headed by the lawyer

Kamil Al-Chadirchi, and Hizb Al-Shaab, a party that resembles the Israeli Mapam (sans- Zionism). Hence it seemed easy to present the matter of an alliance with the British, taking full advantage of the anti-Zionist or anti-Jewish winds which were blowing in those days because of the actions of the Haganah and Irgun in Palestine.

On November 29, 1947, the UN passed Resolution 181 on the partition of Palestine. This looked to Nouri El-Said like a golden opportunity to divert public opinion in Iraq towards liberating Palestine and at the same time to link Iraq and Britain in a military alliance. Nouri El- Said initiated the campaign to mobilize volunteers to join Faouzi El-Kawakshi's organization. Nouri El-Said and the British were behind the invitations to Arab leaders, including Azzam Pasha (Secretary-General of the Arab League) and Bishara El-Khouri (President of Lebanon) to come to Baghdad. Yet the secret police was ordered to arrest anyone who was suspected of being a leftist, taking advantage of the fact that the representatives of the Soviet Union supported them. Late 1947 was marked by demonstrations on the theme of "Liberate Palestine," as well as fund- raising and mobilizing volunteers. This campaign was similar to Ben-Gurion's in 1955 against Egypt, when fund raising began for the "Defense Fund."

The campaign propped up the Hizb El-Istiklal leadership, a party of unmistakable Fascist stripes that was headed by Mohammed Mehdi Koubba, and that published a daily organ called Liwa Al-Istiklal (Flag of Freedom). This party supported the policies of Nouri El-Said in that it manipulated public opinion against the left-wing parties and diverted it towards "Palestine."

In early December 1947, Nouri El-Said decided that in early January 1948, the alliance with his British masters was to be signed. The police detained hundreds of educated young men as well as other youths as a preventive measure prior to the signing. All were sentenced to several years of probation (they were required to show up three times a day at the police station nearest to their residences) or they were exiled to distant villages. But all these preventive measures were unable to stop the Arab people from taking to the streets and protesting against the plots of the British and their agents.

On December 4, the Iraqis demonstrated their abhorrence and hatred of the British and the regime of Nouri El-Said. There were also stormy demonstrations in Egyptian cities against renewing the covenant of 1936. But despite heavy-handed and repressive measures employed by governments in both countries, the demonstrations did not stop. Nouri El-Said and King Farouk took action to divert the public attention towards Palestine. Several days later, the Haganah began to assist in this endeavor.

On December 9, Jewish forces carried out the massacres of Arabs in numerous places. At the large Arab village of Yazour the Irgun men hurled grenades at people sitting in cafés, killing many. On the 11th the passengers of several Arab buses were attacked with hand grenades and automatic weapons. A large number of the casualties were children.

The same day, the Haganah forces attacked the inhabitants of the city of Ramleh and massacred the residents of a large house with hand grenades. The incident triggered retaliation and counter- retaliation. This information, supplemented by photographs of the victims and calls of Liwa Al- Istiklal that the Jews were the fifth column in the body of the Arab nation, had considerable effect on the uneducated masses, creating an anti-Jewish atmosphere. Demonstrations in Iraq and Egypt continued.

At that time, demonstrations in Baghdad were stormy. The British demanded that the crowds be controlled and the government acquiesced

and installed automatic weapons on top of the mosques. They opened fire on the demonstrators, using Dum-Dum (exploding) bullets. Tens of victims were hit on the bridge over the Tigris, but the demonstrations did not end. On the day of the funerals, the Jews came out massively to participate. The funeral procession of Iraqi Jews included in excess 80,000 participants, headed by community leaders. This procession angered Nouri El-Said, and arrests of Jewish youth began, charging them with being members of the Zionist movement.

Most activists of the League to Combat Zionism were arrested, badly tortured and sentenced to decades in prison. The demonstrations did not end and turned even stormier as female high school students participated. Tens of armored vehicles of the special police force were burned. Policemen were afraid to go out. The government fell and none of those who were loyal to the British dared to be candidates for Prime Minister in a new government. Days went by and the masses alone took control of the streets of Baghdad. Britain's agents attempted to funnel the wrath of the masses against the Jews by exploiting the events in Palestine; but to no avail.

The demonstrators carried banners in large print that read "WE ARE THE BROTHERS OF THE JEWS AND THE ENEMIES OF ZIONISM." The British were now pressuring the Arab leaders to intervene militarily in Palestine, but the latter were unable to comply, given the anti-British sentiment in the streets of the Arab capitals. Even though there were Jewish casualties in the Arab states, the situation did not deteriorate to the point of massacres. The British were pressing and the leaders of the Arab states were looking for a pretext to intervene militarily. They were helped by, of all people, the Jews of Palestine.

On April 9, the Irgun and Stern Gang forces, with the support and blessing of the Haganah carried out a horrendous massacre in the Arab village of Deir Yassin, near Jerusalem. Most of its residents earned their living by collecting stones for Jewish contractors and were on good terms with the Jews of Jerusalem. There even was a non-aggression agreement between the leader of the village and the Haganah headquarters. The victims were brutalized.

Pictures of the massacres of the disemboweled victims were printed in the Iraqi press, and this sufficed to accomplish the purpose sought by the British. The atmosphere became highly charged, and hostility towards Jews mounted daily. Iraq and Egypt agreed to send their armies to intervene in Palestine-but to no avail. The new Iraqi Prime Minister, Salih Jaaber (a Shiite religious leader) was in fact appointed for one reason only, namely to diffuse tensions and make military intervention in Palestine possible. Gradually it became clear that the fate of Palestine had already been sealed and the masses began to rebel.

The government was in fact wobbling. There were stormy demonstrations every week against the government and its leaders and slogans and calls such as "SALIH JABBER EL-KUNDARA, WA NOURI EL-SAID EL-KAITANA" (Salih Jaaber is the boot and Nouri El-Said is the shoelace). The government responded with guns. Although many died, the demonstrations did not end.

six

A Military Government to Oppress the People

As soon as the Iraqi army left for the front in Palestine, a state of emergency was declared in Iraq and the country was divided into four military government areas:

1. The southern district whose center was the port city of Basra.
2. The central district whose center was the capital Baghdad.
3. The northern centers of Mosul and Kirkuk.

These four military centers acted in coordination with the central government. Thousands were arrested and tortured. The centers were under the command of the new Defense Minister, Saddik El-Bassam, a member of the El-Istiklal party, which was a chauvinistic party with fascist tendencies. El-Bassam was himself a total fascist, who, as soon as he was appointed, took action behind the scenes to organize demonstrations of El-Istiklal party supporters in the major cities.

Demonstrations, which began in Basra were aimed particularly at spreading hatred towards Jews, and especially against the richest man among Basra's Jews, Shafik Addas who was a well-known automobile importer. One of the signs carried by El-Istiklal party demonstrators was "Death to Addas." This slogan alone sufficed to cause panic among the Jews and other minorities. In and around the city of Basra lived several thousand Mandaeans (Shabaites).

Addas telephoned the British consul in Basra and complained to him about the slogans and insults against him. The latter did not appear surprised.

Addas asked the consul if there was any real danger for him. The consul replied that he would inquire with the district officer, Mahmud Tabkachli, who said there were no charges pending against Addas. The consul passed on the information to Addas. But the next day, policemen and soldiers were ordered by the military governors to arrest Addas, and promptly took him to a military base for detention. Meanwhile, the falsification machine began to work diligently and witnesses were coached to falsely testify that when they were in Palestine, they found cases of ammunition stamped with Shafik Addas' address and commercial logo.

The court martial headed by General Abdullah Rifaat El-Nassani complied with the emergency laws. The two attorneys who represented Addas were wellknown: Faik Taoufik Ali and Mohammed Zaki Kattab. When they came to request the text of the indictment as well as time to study it, they were turned down. When they attempted to cross-examine the prosecution witnesses, the presiding judge yelled at them. They tried to call defense witnesses, but they were vehemently condemned for

defending a Zionist criminal. By order the attorneys were detained. This was an unprecedented act in the history of Iraq. Then, one of Iraq's most active attorneys, Ahmed Mokhtar Baban, interceded on their behalf, and they were released. In reality, the court had sealed Addas' fate from the beginning.

This was carried out under the orders from the Defense Minister because the situation demanded it. It was necessary to channel the public's indignation towards an enemy other than the government. The court found Addas guilty and sentenced him to die by hanging. The death warrant was forwarded to Abd El-Ilah for his signature. Addas was on friendly terms with the Regent who stayed at Addas' house when he visited Basra. The warrant was kept for two days in Abd El-Ilah's office in the Al-Rihab Palace. On the third day, Abd El-Ilah convened a meeting at the palace. The Prime Minister and a number of Ministers and former Prime Ministers attended it. The Regent gravely told his audience:

> I believe that none of you would want to spill the pure blood of an innocent man, and that you do not want such a blatant injustice committed in our country. The Islamic religion forbids us to carry such an abomination. We are fighting Zionists, not Iraqi Jews. I do not understand why we must murder this Jew.

The ministers listened and consulted each other. When the Regent Abd El-Ilah returned from his relaxation room, they told him point blank: "Saydi, your position is in peril, and your seat is wobbling. If you want to save your position, you must make a scapegoat of Addas."

Abd El-Ilah signed the warrant, saying: "God, you are my witness that I and my kingdom are innocent of the blood of this Jew! "

The next day, the gallows were set up in the square near the house that Addas had newly built. The citizens of Basra were invited to come and witness the death of a "traitor." Addas was executed on August 23, 1948.

The newspapers dependent on the government, and especially *Liwa El-Istiklal*, wrote: "Addas had built his new palace so that it could be used as the new Israeli Consulate." Many Moslems began to publicly express their indignation about the open murder and demanded the resignation of the Prime Minister. Slogans were painted on the walls: "WITH ADDAS' MURDER, JUSTICE WAS MURDERED." A week later, the Defense Minister had to resign, and a more flexible man was appointed.

The Story of Shafik Addas

Shafik Addas was the son of a wealthy Jewish family and was among Basra's richest men, if not the richest. He was highly respected and most of the city's dignitaries would stay at his house because the man showed generosity when it came to entertaining, as is customary among Arabs. In addition, he would assist anyone who needed help, regardless of who that person was.

The British, who had military barracks and bases in Iraq, decided to sell their surplus equipment, since most of them left when World War II was over. The military equipment (weapons, ammunition and radios) was given to the Iraqi army after the Iraqi government inspected it and selected whatever seemed potentially useful for its army. The rest of the equipment was first checked by a military commission headed by General Gazi El-Dagistani (who later became Chief of Staff of the Iraqi army), which approved the request to sell it.

Many were eager to purchase the equipment, officially classified as "junk." Addas and a local Arab partner decided to make an offer to purchase all the equipment. Their bid was the highest. They were able to buy the equipment and immediately began to sell it for local use. What was left over was loaded on a cargo ship and sent to Italy where a local company purchased it. This is the entire story of Shafik Addas.

The anti-Jewish propaganda began as soon as the state of emergency was declared and the military government was formed. Twenty Jewish dignitaries from Basra were arrested. Others were arrested in Baghdad and Mosul as well. They were charged with breaching the peace and organizing demonstrations. Some were charged with trading with the Russians during World War II. They had to pay thousands of Dinars in fines to secure their release. Letters that came from Palestine before the 1948 war were seized by the censors and forwarded to the court, and any person who was the recipient of such a letter became a Zionist criminal. Many were tortured, abused and forced to pay large sums of money.

The Arrest of a judge

The situation deteriorated. Reuven Bitat, a district judge, was put on trial for something he had done in 1924: he had permitted an object to be given to Jewish institutions in Jerusalem. The truth is that many were arrested, especially after two Israelis who infiltrated the Gaza Strip were caught as they were trying to lace the water wells with the microorganisms of dysentery and typhus.

The two men were captured by Egyptian soldiers, pleaded guilty, and were executed. The news about their arrest was reported in late May 1948, and caused panic in Iraq among the Jews and Moslems who became fearful because of the spread of cholera in Egypt at the time.

Whenever a Jew threw an empty bottle in the public garbage, he would be detained and investigated, and the bottle and its contents would be scrutinized. Many Jews were arrested on phony pretexts, but as noted, the Iraqi government was adept at exploiting what was happening on the Palestine front in order to channel the bitterness of the masses towards the Jews. The atmosphere was charged, but it was still possible to live normal lives.

The State of Israel was established, the Palestine war was raging, and the Iraqi army at the time was concentrated around Jennine in the Triangle area. Iraqi radios were broadcasting lies about their armies' victories. But many knew the news was false, and their purpose was to distract the public from burning domestic issues.

Nouri El-Said and Israel

Towards the end of 1948, Nouri El-Said began to discuss with his Iraqi and British associates a plan of population exchange. Iraq would send her Jews to Palestine via Jordan, and in return, would absorb the Palestinian Arabs Israel had been evicting and continued to evict. His proposal also included the mutual confiscation of 'property. At first Nouri El-Said decided to get rid of the communist leadership.

In February, there was intense unrest on the streets of Baghdad from demonstrators who were shouting *'Sabaat Dawwal Maazurna Min El-Dawla A1-Maazuma,'* which meant "Seven states are fleeing from the so-called state (Israel)." The demonstrations were violently dispersed, but unrest continued.

In early February 1949, as the armistice talks in Rhodes were going on and as Syria and Lebanon announced they were joining the talks, Nouri El-Said decided to open talks about his plan to exchange populations and property.

At first, a schedule was prepared under which the leaders of the communist party would be executed. At that time there was a state of emergency in Iraq, and the leaders were to be executed in the central prison in Baghdad. Then, it was reported that three of the leaders had been executed.

Nouri El-Said then left for Jordan where he met with British ambassador Aleck Kirkbride and the Jordanian Prime Minister Samir El-Rifai. They were to discuss important matters related to Palestine. To the surprise of the two men, Nouri El-Said made his proposal. He said among other things that he would transport the Jews of Iraq in military trucks to Israel via Jordan. Samir El-Rifai flatly turned down the plan for fear that riots would break out among the Arab refugees who were living in tents in Jordan and said "I will not be a partner in this crime!"

The British Foreign Office also expressed its reservations about Nouri El-Said's plan and contacted its ambassador in Baghdad, asking him to explain to El-Said that such an action might result in Israel refusing to pay compensation for the property of the Palestinian refugees. Moreover, they thought it could be used as propaganda against Iraq. The British Consul in East- Jerusalem, Sir Hugh Doe, also cautioned against the plan of Nouri El-Said, arguing that such an action would backfire against the Iraqi regime and against His Majesty's rule (Great Britain).

Henry Mac, the British ambassador in Baghdad, was also made aware of the confidential plan, but he argued he did not think the Iraqi government could or would carry out such a plan. In spite of the British response, it appeared that Nouri El-Said was serious.

Al-Kifah (the Struggle)

A Syrian newspaper wrote on March 28, 1949:

> The Arab summit meeting in Beirut decided that if Israel refuses to allow the Palestinian refugees to return to their homes, the Arab governments would take action to evict the Jews from the Arab countries.

Is there a proof more convincing than this for the intention to exchange populations? It may be argued that this was the intention of the Arab states alone and not Israel's. But could there have been such an exchange of populations without coordination with the State of Israel? Certainly not. There is further evidence of this. In an interview in the same newspaper, the Iraqi representative to the UN said: "We did have in mind an exchange of population between Arabs and Jews."

This was the first stage of cooperation between Nouri El-Said and Israel to evict the Jews from Iraq. Not long after, Nouri El-Said began the second stage of his plan. He created the conditions to make the lives of Iraqi Jews miserable, hoping they would want to leave the country. Yosef Weitz, an Israeli official of the Jewish Agency who engineered the mass expulsion of Arabs from Palestine, proposed this method. Israel followed the same plan with the residents of the Palestinian village of El-Fallouja, forcing them to leave.

First, the Iraqi Jewish government employees were fired from their jobs. Many were in charge of the airports, trains, railroads, the port of

Basra, the customs and the Treasury. They also held hundreds of teaching and engineering positions, especially in the landscaping and water management departments. Then, the Iraqi government began to put restrictions on Jewish businessmen. They were not granted new import or export permits, and their membership cards with the Chamber of Commerce were not renewed.

The police began to arrest Jews for the most trivial reasons. Many young men who did not want to serve the two-year compulsory service in the Iraqi army and did not have 50 Dinars (equivalent to 50 Pounds Sterling) to pay for an exemption, chose to cross the border to Iran. From there, they were taken to the Iranian capital. From Tehran they were flown to Israel. The author of this book participated in the smuggling of Iraqi Jews into Iran.

Expulsion of Iraqi Jews with Israel's Blessing

After the task of firing Jewish government workers was completed, and after thousands were left without work or income, Nouri El-Said started again to send feelers to the British Foreign Office. This time he had a new proposal: "Expulsion of Iraqi Jews without Iraq absorbing Palestinian refugees." The British Foreign Office began confidential consultations. Apparently, the information was conveyed to Israel by the British ambassadors in the two countries. In Israel, this information was leaked by the government to the press, such as follows:

A Constructive Proposal from Baghdad

> An Arab strong man was found who agreed to exchange Arab Jews for Arab Palestinians. *(Yediot Aharonot,* October 16, 1949)
>
> A proposal to exchange all Arab Jews for the refugees will be submitted by Iraq to the Arab League. At any rate, from a practical perspective, there is no way as yet to consider the proposal because there is no kernel of feasibility ... It appears that the main purpose of the proposal is to be used as Arab propaganda on the eve of the debate on Palestine, at the United Nations General Assembly. *(YediotAharonot,* October 18, 1949)
>
> Iraq covets Jewish property. The war against Israel caused her heavy losses and it wants to be compensated with Jewish funds. *(Maariv,* October 18, 1949)
>
> The (Israeli) Foreign Minister has so far received no official report about the Iraqi proposal to exchange populations to which the spokesman for the research group in Beirut alluded. But political sources here will not rule out such a proposal. *(Davar,* October 18, 1949)

It is interesting that *Davar,* a newspaper close to the Israeli Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, was in position to report that Baghdad's proposal was merely the result of a British initiative. The report about Nouri El-Said's proposal greatly embarrassed a number of Arab leaders. It also caused unrest among Palestinian refugees in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Israel then understood that the Iraqi regime was in danger and began to take action. On October 23, 1949, it requested from the governments of Great Britain and the United States to intercede urgently

on behalf of the Jews of Iraq who were persecuted by their government (see *The 20th Century*, published by Israel's Defense Ministry).

The Iraqi representative to the United Nations, Fadil al-jamali who later became Iraq's foreign Minister, told the *New York Times* (October 31, 1949) the following:

> The circulating reports that Iraq is willing to accept 100,000 Palestinian refugees in exchange for the same number of Jews who would leave Iraq came from Zionist sources. I, on behalf of the Iraqi government, emphatically deny all these reports.

Cooperation between Ben-Gurion and Nouri El-Said

Some Facts

In Chapter Four, we reviewed the history of the Jews in Iraq since they began to immigrate to this country through the Persian occupation and the Abbasid Caliphate, and until the Arab Iraqi regime. From this review, we learned that the Jews lived comfortably in Iraq; they were well integrated with the rest of the citizens of the country in all walks of life, although in fact, they were a state within a state. They did not leave Iraq, not even when the Persian commander Cyrus, claiming to be the long-awaited Messiah, promised to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem.

According to some sources, only about a third of Babylonian Jewry followed him. The Jews ended their wanderings when the Arabs took office. The Jews prospered, especially during the Abbasid Caliphs, an era that came to be known as the *Golden Age* of Iraqi Jewry.

They did not leave Iraq in spite of all the political upsets it endured-especially during the Mongol occupation and massacre of the Jews, as well as other minorities.

Except for 90 families, they did not leave Iraq when the Ottoman rulers began to restrict and poison their lives under the principle of "divide and rule." They did not leave Iraq, even after the massacre of Baghdad in 1941, a massacre that was organized by the British.

The question we must now ask is:

Why did the Jews decide to leave Iraq in the years 1949-1952?

To find the answer to this question, one must examine the context of this mass exodus. In the years 1949-51, a coalition of sorts was formed between the Iraqi government, which was supported by the British and the local reactionaries, and the leadership of the Zionist movement, who knew how to strike at the deep roots of the Jews in Iraq. The purpose of the partnership was to displace the Jews from Iraq to Israel.

On another front, the Iraqi governments of Nouri El-Said and Taoufik El-Souweidi were interested in binding Iraq to sign enslaving pacts with the British. But the Iraqi leftists were the only ones opposed to these pacts, in particular the communist party and the Socialist People's party, headed by Attorney Kamil El-Chardichi. In these two parties were hundreds of Jews of the Iraqi intelligentsia, and in fact, many of them occupied key positions in these two parties.

Nouri El-Said prepared many plans to carry out an exchange (or "transfer") of populations with Israel. In exchange for the refugees, which Israel had expelled from its conquered territory, it would receive the Iraqi Jews who interfered with its designs. See Shlomo Hillel's *Operation Babylon*

(Ruah Kadim, Garden City, NY. Doubleday, 1987.) The Iraqi government created the necessary atmosphere to cause unhappiness among the Jews.

At first, in the criminal code, the clauses against communist and Zionist organizations were combined. Clause #181 was divided in two parts: 81A was against communist subversion, and 81B was against Zionist subversion. Every Jew arrested for expressing an opinion that contradicted the policy of the government was considered a Zionist agitator. One must keep in mind the position of the communist party on the partition of Palestine. When a young Jew was arrested for activities against the regime, the police would announce to the media that he had been arrested under Clause 81 of the criminal code.

Moreover, if his name was Ezra or Yehezkel (typical Jewish names), then it was concluded that he was a Zionist. Since the number of Jewish youths guilty of such violations was relatively high because of their participation in demonstrations against pacts with Great Britain or for distributing leaflets against the British, a hostile atmosphere developed.

As soon as the Iraqi army returned from the war in Palestine, the government began to dismiss all government workers who were Jewish and barred the hiring of new Jewish employees.

A New Social Class

In lieu of the dismissed Jewish workers, the government hired non-Jews who were much less qualified. The number of these new workers exceeded 11,000 in the Treasury and Finance Department, the Post Office, the Department of Transportation (railroads, airports and the port of Basra), the Departments of Health and Insurance, the Department of Education and all other government agencies.

The new employees who took over the positions of the dismissed Jews were fervent supporters of the government and its anti-Jewish policies. Former government employees began to exhaust their savings in order to subsist. But even so, there was no despair among the Jews, and the decision to depart from Iraq was far from their minds.

The Collaboration Continues

Previously, it was mentioned that the Iraqi government had collaborated with the Zionist movement by creating the proper atmosphere for strengthening the power and influence of the Zionist movement in Iraq, whether by dismissing thousands of state Jewish employees or by the arbitrary arrest of Jewish citizens.

Collaboration was not limited to creating desirable conditions for Zionism to flourish. For instance, a law that permitted Jews to renounce their citizenship in order to move out of Iraq was proposed under the request of the Jewish community leaders (Yehezkel Shem-Tov and Moshe Shohat) who were really working for the Zionist movement.

On April 8, 1950, a bomb was thrown on a crowd of Jews who were celebrating Passover at the Café Dar El-Beyda in Baghdad. What followed revealed how pronounced and overt the collaboration was between the leaders of the Iraqi regime and the Zionist movement. For instance, the police arrested suspects who were found to belong to Ha'shura, the military branch of the Movement. Immediately after their arrest, the magistrate who instructed the investigation issued a statement. Salman El-Biyat said there was an obvious connection between the explosion and the distributors of Zionist leaflets that were handed out after the bombing. As soon as the magistrate made this fact public in spite of the fact that the

investigation was at its peak, an order came from "above" to transfer the investigation file to another magistrate. A change of magistrates during the course of an investigation was an unprecedented act, even relative to the norms that prevailed under the regimes of Nouri El-Said and Taoufik El-Souweidi. It was clear that transferring the file was the first step towards ending the investigation and covering the trail.

The collaboration was also noticed when the Prime Minister agreed to regard the team of employees who filed the registration of Jews who gave up the Iraqi citizenship as senior employees of the Interior Ministry, appointed directly by the Minister himself, despite the fact that most of that team was composed of members of the Zionist movement.

The collaboration continued further when Nouri El-Said as a Prime Minister invited to his office the representatives of the Near East Air Transport Company in order to discuss with them the terms of flying Jews out of Iraq in order to speed their departure. When it was suggested to Nouri El-Said that Jews could be trucked to Jerusalem through the Jordanian desert, he accepted the idea and passed it on to King Abdullah of Jordan when the latter visited Baghdad. [See *Me-'ever la midbar (Road in the Desert)* by Yosef Me'ir. Tel Aviv: Ma'arakhot, 1973 and *Ruah Kadim, (Operation Babylon),* by Shlomo Hillel, op. cit.).

But one must not overlook another sphere of cooperation. It occurred when the Zionist movement requested that the planes of the Near East Air Transport Company (NEAT) could fly directly from Baghdad to Lod, without a stopover in Nicosia, Cyprus, as was previously the case. This is a very important point, which needed to be adequately clarified. When the Iraqi government allowed NEAT to fly Jews out of Baghdad, it was abiding by the rule that its planes should first fly to a country that had diplomatic ties to Iraq, and would under no circumstance fly directly to Lod. But in late 1950, members of the Zionist movement asked the Prime Minister and the Interior Minister to amend this rule. After all, every one in the world knew where the Jews were headed. Therefore, they should be allowed to fly from Baghdad to Lod. The Iraqi Prime Minister agreed to the request. An Iraqi police officer would escort the passengers on the plane and would receive a regal reception at Lod airport.

A question then arises: If it was so good, why did it become bad? If there was cooperation, what ultimately led to the trials and executions?

The Iraqi government indeed collaborated with the Zionist movement and tolerated its activities, but only to a certain point.

All Iraqi governments firmly prohibited any political group from organizing for the purpose of subversive activities. Members of such organizations were persecuted until the groups vanished. This is particularly true of armed political subversive organizations.

Since the Zionists had a large store of illegal weapons, any weakness from the government would have been interpreted as "loosening the noose" and a multitude of armed underground movements would emerge and try to overthrow the government. One exception was during the regime of President Ahmed Hassan El-Baker, when his government allowed the youth organization "Revolutionary Guard" of the "Baath Party" to carry arms. But they were under strict supervision by army officers and by the government.

Therefore, given the amount of weapons, the fact that a connection was made between the leaflets and the Zionist movement, the police and the Special Department (CID) were ordered to investigate in full to find those who were responsible. The same typewriter was used to type the Zionist leaflets and the anti-American leaflet that was distributed

immediately after the explosion at the American Cultural Center of Baghdad.

One must remember that the links between the Zionist movement and General Nouri El-Said were already established by then. Already in 1941, when Nouri El-Said and the Regent Abd El-Ilah fled from Iraq to Palestine, the Jewish Agency took great pains to accommodate them and put them up at the King David Hotel in Jerusalem. Also, Nouri El-Said's son (El-Sabah El-Said) and his Jewish wife (Najjia Fasha) were lodged in a mansion in the city of Ramleh. At Nouri El-Said's request, the Political Department of the Jewish Agency installed a radio station on Mount Carmel so he could broadcast his messages to the Iraqi people with the help of an Arab announcer. (This radio station was also active against the Vichy regime in Syria and Lebanon.)

The Iraqi army was fastidious about guarding weapons and ammunitions because it feared they could be used against the regime. Prior to 1950-51, there was no precedence in Iraq for using sabotage to achieve political goals.

Furthermore, when the need arose, it was possible to call a magistrate at any time of day or night, especially to collect the testimony of someone who was near death.

By the same token, the shrapnel found after each explosion were identical to those found in the stockpiles of the Zionist movement.

Also, the police found, near Yosef Basri, a leather bag that belonged to him and that contained traces of the same explosive that was used to blow up the American Cultural Center of Baghdad.

The only non-governmental organization that was interested in the Jews leaving Iraq at any price and that had explosives and grenades as well as members trained to use them was the Zionist movement. As already mentioned, the anti-American leaflets found near the American Cultural Center, after the explosion, were typed with the same typewriter that was used to type the leaflets that were distributed immediately after the bombing of the Café Dar El-Beyda.

In the following chapters, we will point to the contradictions in Ben-Porat's claims and we will provide evidence to confirm that he was at large when the attacks took place. The attacks ceased only after Ben-Porat and his associates had left Iraq.

Mordechal Ben-Porat

In September 1949, I escaped from the prison of Abu-Ghreib military base in Iraq. I managed to cross the border to Iran, and after a few days' rest, I began to spirit Iraqi Jews across the border into Iran. The fugitives were invited to stay temporarily in our large home, which was located across the road from the Iranian border police in the city of Khurromshahr. From there, we would escort them to an immigrant's camp in Tehran where they would undergo some tests and background checks before they were flown to Israel.

One day in September, while I was in Tehran, I went to visit a friend, Khaddouri Ozeir, whose family had lived in Khurromshahr and in Basra before moving to Tehran. The oldest Ozeir son used to run the famous Diana Theater, and had invited me to their home for tea. They had another guest that day, an Israeli *shaliah* (emissary) whose name was Murad Kissas.

My friend asked me, "Would you like to meet him?" Before I had a chance to reply, I noticed a tall, bespectacled man lying on a couch on the

opposite side of the room. He got up from the couch, extended his hand and said, "Very pleased to meet you, my name is Ben-Porat."

I had never met him before, either as Ben-Porat or as Murad Kissas, his name at birth. I knew other *shaliahs*, such as Cohen from the kibbutz of Gesher Aziv, who was the coordinator of immigration in Tehran, and who also covered Iraq. I knew Dov Adiv, who was also working for Air France. I knew Shlomo Hillel, who had visited us in 1946. I knew Yerashmiel Asa from kibbutz Houlata. I had worked with his wife Miriam, and we organized the festivities at Israel's independence celebration at the Tehran immigration camp. I knew Yo'av Goral and Akiva. But I did not know Mordechai Ben-Porat. We had nothing to talk about. He went back to his nap as I continued to drink tea. Later I left the Ozeirs' house and went to visit Mouallem Zion without another word exchanged with Ben-Porat.

I learned that Ben-Porat had been sent by the Ha'aliyah Institute of Immigration in order to run the business in Baghdad, where hundreds of members of the Zionist movement had been arrested. I also learned that Ben-Porat was briefed in full about the possibility of Israeli-Iraqi cooperation in the immigration of Iraqi Jews, as well as the possibility of enacting a law to revoke the citizenship of Iraqi Jews, He also knew the conditions for enacting such a law.

As soon as Ben-Porat arrived in Baghdad, the conflicts among various Zionist groups began, and it turned out that Ben-Porat was always a factor in the discord (see Me'ir Yosef's *A Road in the Desert, op. cit.)*.

Mordechai Ben-Porat (formerly known as Mufrad Kissas) was born in Baghdad in 1923. He immigrated to Israel in 1945. He had returned to Baghdad from Tehran, having been sent to manage the flight of Jews via Iran.

Another emissary was Yosef Basri, a lawyer who was also born in Baghdad in 1923. He was first active in the Socialist People's Party and later got involved in the Zionist movement, joining the ranks of Ha'shura. When the arrests began, the Movement decided to spirit him to Israel via Iran, but those in Tehran decided otherwise and sent him back to Baghdad as a security agent.

The First Partner: The Iraqi Government

In October 1949, even though the new Iraqi government abolished martial law in the country and promised concessions and civic liberties, the prisons of the country, and especially Baghdad, were packed with men and women, mostly Jewish. Many of them had been arrested for subversive political activities when they demonstrated against the treaties with Great Britain. Others were arrested when they tried to leave the country illegally.

The government wanted to get rid of the communist Jews at any price, but was unable to deport them merely for their political opinions. Thus, it tightened the screws on all Iraqi Jews, hoping not only ordinary Jews would leave the country, but communist Jews as well. However, the British wanted to bring about a government that would immediately sign a new Iraqi-British treaty, replacing the defunct Portsmouth Treaty.

A New Government

In early 1950, Nouri El-Said managed to bring about the downfall of the government of Ali Joudat El-Ayoubi. The forming of a new government of Taoufik El-Souweidi was designed to speed up the signing of a new treaty with the British.

This convinced El-Souweidi, who also knew the intention of his master, Nouri El-Said. In addition, he had also been promised a handsome sum of money if the law to revoke the Jews' citizenship were to be enacted. Since it was also necessary to convince the minister of interior, Salih Jaaber, two Zionist agents who used to hold high ranks in the Iraqi administration (Moshe Shohat and Sassoon Abid) were sent to pay him a visit.

A few days later, representatives of the two parties began to formulate a rough draft of the bill. It followed very closely the model suggested by Israel through its agents in Baghdad. There was permanent radio contact between Israel and its agents in Baghdad in addition to telephone communication between Baghdad and Tehran.

On March 3, 1950, the minister of interior, Salih Jaaber, and Mr. El-Arpali submitted the bill to the Iraqi Parliament and they began the debate.

A Jewish senator, Ezra Menachem, said:

> Jews have lived in Iraq for over 2,500 years. Our forefather Abraham was born on this land ... (he further reviewed the history of the Jews in Iraq) ... and it would therefore be difficult for the Jews to leave this country. However, since they are already doing so, it must be the result of pressure and oppression ...

Another senator, Mouzahim El-Pachachi, said:

> You could at least make the departure of the Iraqi Jews conditional on the return of Palestinian refugees to their homeland. Those who want to see this law enacted are the mouthpieces of the chauvinistic El-Istiklal Party.

Ezra Menachem again insisted that the rights of the Jews who wished to continue living in Iraq as well as the rights of the Jews who wanted to give up their Iraqi citizenship but were unable to leave the country, must be guaranteed. The bill was debated for four days, and was passed on March 9, 1950. It went into effect immediately. The Minister of the Interior presented it to the Parliament in these words:

> ... Jews have started to flee Iraq recently, and are doing so in increasing numbers. At first, this was done on an individual basis, one person at a time. Now this phenomenon has taken proportions that cannot be overlooked. According to the information we received from the governors of the provinces in recent weeks, there are tens of hundreds of individuals attempting to flee. Gangs are formed in order to spirit them. You may have noticed the public auction centers that have been set up for people planning to settle their affairs before fleeing. These centers are operating in the open, and hundreds of people are frequenting them. We got in touch with some of the wise men in the community and asked them to assist the authorities in tending this provocative state of affairs, but they failed to stem the flight ... Therefore, the government saw fit to present this bill, since it is not in the interest of the state to force some of its citizens to stay in Iraq against their will.

The government appointed a group of senior officials. All were Zionist Jews recommended by Yehezkel Shem-Tov. They were authorized by the

minister of interior to be government employees in charge of registering the Jews who wished to give up their citizenship.

In effect, a partnership was established here: the government wanted to remove the Jewish communists (the agitators) and the Zionist movement wanted to remove all the Jews. But there was one difference: the Zionist movement wanted all the Jews to go to Israel and nowhere else.

The Zionists came to an agreement with the government to issue a one-time exit visa (not a political refugee visa) that allowed the bearer to leave Iraq. This visa was based on instructions from Israel.

Additional cooperation began immediately. Offices were set up in synagogues or in Jewish community schools. Government officials, Jewish community officials appointed by the government and activists in the Movement all worked together. Senior police officers were walking around inside the improvised offices, chatting with the members of the Movement as it is written in the Bible: "the wolf and the lamb shall live together." On Saturday April 8, representatives of the branches began to arrive, as well as representatives of the various branches (Ha'halutz, Ha'shura, Ha'aliyah and Ha'modiyein), with the Israeli agents. This group became known as the "United Institute." The debate was tumultuous and the subject was immigration to Israel and registration.

Ben-Porat's Big Mouth

The Mossad Report

On August 14, 1949, the Immigration Institute of the Jewish Agency contacted the Israeli General Security Service (Mossad), and requested information about a man named Mordechai Ben-Porat (formerly known as Murad Kissas) who was a candidate for a secret mission in enemy territory (Iraq).

The Mossad reported to the Immigration Institute that the man was loyal, but very ambitious, that he was lacking initiative and had a ... "big mouth." (See Yosef Me'ir, *Road in the Desert, op. cit.*) As soon as Ben-Porat arrived in Iraq, he began to act like a dictator. He disregarded all the necessary precautions a man responsible for the underground should have taken. A number. of times, he got in trouble with the police for being obstinate or failing to take precautions, despite the repeated warnings of his associates.

In one instance, he caused the greatest amount of damage to the Zionist movement anyone has ever caused, as well as to the Jews, and to himself. All of this was due to his carelessness. In addition to his callousness, fights always erupted because of the manner in which he treated others, particularly the head of the community and the members of the committee.

SEVEN

Israeli Bombs against Baghdad Jews

The Jewish holiday of Passover is an ancient rite. Originally in the Middle East, it was the holiday of the shepherds. They would get together, slaughter a sheep and start a lively dance in front of the fire while the meat was grilling. For a whole week, they would sing and pray for a good and green year.

The holiday comes at the beginning of spring. The Persians call it *Naq Ruz* (the new day), and the Egyptian Jews call it *Sham El-Nissim* (the breeze). All follow the same custom: the family members gather, eat well from the fruit of the land and from the slaughtered animals, dance, and at times, match single men and women. Most marriages were concluded during this holiday.

As they had done for years, the Jews of Baghdad would travel on Passover. Some would go to El-jezeira, an island on the Tigris River near Baghdad. There, they would sit around a bonfire and eat grilled *masgouf* (a fish prepared by local farmers) and drink wine and spirits. Moslems and Christians would often come to celebrate this traditional holiday with their Jewish friends. Some would sail on the river, and others would gather in the numerous cafés on Abu Nuwwas Street or stroll along the riverbank.

On the evening of April 8, 1950, a large group was sitting at the Café Dar El-Beyda, where young Jewish professionals as well as government employees and intellectuals would meet. Not too far from the Café Dar El-Beyda is the Café El-Hana, frequented by activists in the Zionist movement. At 9:15 PM there was the sound of an explosion at the Café Dar El-Beyda, and four customers fell to the ground, bleeding. Akram Ezra, Murad Khaddouri, Shaul Yosef and Elias Yosef were taken to a nearby hospital. One of them was described as being in critical condition. The police arrived right away and began to investigate.

According to witnesses, a grenade had been thrown from a car carrying three young passengers. The police began to investigate and arrested four suspects at their homes. Among them were two Mouallem brothers. During the author's research, it appeared that these two young men were members of Ha'shura, the military branch of the Zionist movement in Iraq.

At the scene of the explosion, the police investigation was conducted by Abd El-Jaaber Fahmi and lasted all night. The investigating judge, Salman El-Biyyat worked on the case zealously and found out that on that very night leaflets had been handed out, calling upon the Jews to leave Iraq immediately.

What puzzled the judge was that not only the date of Saturday April 8, 1950 was written on the leaflet, but that the hour (4 PM) was mentioned as well. This odd precision demonstrated that those who wrote the leaflet were expecting something to happen after 4 PM that day or later. The time seemed to have been included as an alibi. Between the content of the leaflet, calling upon the Jews to leave Iraq, and the event predicted by the leaflet, what could happen if not the explosion at the Café Dar El-Beyda?

While making these points, Salman El-Biyyat examined older leaflets produced by the Zionist movement, among them a March 16, 1950 leaflet. The hour was not listed on any of them. Hence, he concluded that those who produced the leaflet of April 8th that contained the time of 4 PM knew what was going to happen. Therefore, there had to be a connection between those who wrote the leaflet, i.e., the Zionist movement, and those who tossed the bomb at the Café Dar El-Beyda.

The Investigating judge is Replaced

The leaders of the Zionist movement learned about the investigating judge Salman El-Biyyat's conclusions and took frantic action behind the scenes.

Suddenly, El-Biyyat received notice from the Iraqi Minister of Interior that the case was transferred to Judge Kamal Shaheen, a judge in the northern district of Al-Ratsafa in Baghdad. The transfer of a case to another investigator was an unprecedented act, especially in the midst of an investigation. That same day, the two Mouallem Brothers were released on bail. Within hours, they and their bailers were spirited across the Iranian border. It was rumored that they were first taken to Basra and then smuggled into Iran before being sent to Israel. Mordechai Ben-Porat informed his superiors in a telegram that it was the men of the El-Istiklal Party who committed the bombing.

Meanwhile, Jews from all over Northern Iraq came in throngs to the synagogues of Baghdad to register to immigrate to Israel.

In late April, two Zionist agents arrived in Baghdad:

1. Shlomo Hillel, a veteran in the Zionist movement in Iraq, who until 1947 smuggled Jews from Iraq on a plane that landed at midnight at an airport near Baghdad. After the lights were turned off, some 65 young men and women jumped on the plane that was slowly moving on the runway. The airplane would take off for Palestine a few minutes later. Shlomo Hillel came to Baghdad with a false British passport. Under the assumed name of Richard Armstrong he was supposed to be the new assistant manager of the Near East Air Transport Company branch in Baghdad.
2. Ronald Barnett, bearing a British passport, who was the newly appointed manager of the Near East Air Transport Company branch in Baghdad.

The two stayed at a luxury hotel in downtown Baghdad. The following day, they met with a representative of the Rauf Air Company who arranged for them to meet with Prime Minister Taoufik El-Souweidi. They went to El-Souweidi's house in the Karimat district of Baghdad where they met with representatives of the Ministry of the Interior and the Office of the Prime Minister.

They discussed at length how to transfer the departing Jews, who, according to the Prime Minister's estimate, were not more than 40,000. It seems at that same meeting, there was also an agreement on the

amounts of money that the Prime Minister and the Minister of the Interior would receive as payoffs.

A few days later, Hillel suddenly left Iraq. A disgruntled representative of a British airline who had previously been granted the privilege to transport the Jews and then lost it to the Near East Air Transport Company, asked the British intelligence service to investigate Armstrong. He was told that no one by that name worked in the British aviation. The representative passed on this information to the Iraqi secret service, which went after him. But Hillel had already left for Nicosia several hours before they reached his hotel.

Soon the rate of Jewish exodus from Iraq dropped again. The excitement following the first bomb quickly died down and once more indifference prevailed. Also, many Jews who had come to Baghdad and given up their Iraqi citizenship did not go to Israel after all.

Then, in late May 1950, a conflict developed between Yehezkel Shem-Tov, the head of the community, and the Community Committee. The latter had realized that Shem-Tov was aligned in many ways with the Zionist movement. A crisis then developed between the leaders of the movement and the Community Committee.

In addition, there were conflicts between the leaders of the Zionist movement itself. Many considered Mordechai Ben-Porat to be a dictator who ignored the rules and institutions. In late May, an order came from Israel: the exodus had to slow down, due to absorption problems inside Israel. In Iraq, this enraged those who were in charge of immigration in Iraq, including Ben-Porat. They argued that time was against them, since in early March 1951 the law that permitted the Jews to leave Iraq was due to expire. They started to put pressure on the Immigration Institute in Israel in order to increase the quota of Iraqi immigrants.

The Second Bomb

The El-Batawin was the most luxurious neighborhood of Baghdad, before Baghdad El-jadida was built. In this area lived the affluent Jews of the upper and middle classes. Most had villas surrounded with plants and greenery. In these large quarters were several cafés where Jews socialized or spent their free time. On June 3, 1950, a hand grenade was hurled from the window of a passing car. No one was hurt, but immediately after the explosion, telegrams were sent to Israel, requesting that the quota for Iraqi immigrants be raised at once.

Among those who sent the telegrams was Ronald Barnett, the manager of the Baghdad branch of the Near East Air Transport Company, and Mordechai Ben-Porat. Ben-Porat's message said: "We are astounded and we are in shock!" These telegrams were in response to a telegram that came from Israel on June 10, 1950, demanding that the pace of immigration be slowed due to problems in Israel. Ben-Porat was anxious to accelerate the exodus of the Jews, but the numbers of those signing up had considerably declined by August, and the exodus had also slowed down.

In his message, Barnett asked Israel to double the quota to at least 400 to 500 persons per day. In fact, by August 25th, 500 individuals who had already given up their citizenship were idling in the Meir Tuweik Synagogue of Baghdad. In a show of support, the Interior Minister, Salih Jaaber, announced he was going to ask the Jordanians to allow the Iraqi Jews to be trucked through Jordan on their way to Israel.

In October 1950, Nouri El-Said invited Ronald Barnett, and as two good friends, they discussed the progress of the Jewish exodus. That same

month, King Abullah of Jordan visited Baghdad. Nouri El-Said brought up the request of allowing the Jews to transit through Jordan, on their way to Israel. King Abdullah, worried about the reactions this would cause in the Arab World, turned down the request.

The Third Bomb

Immigration continued at a slow pace, and in the meantime the Israeli agents in Baghdad continued to hassle the leaders in Israel. Agents pressed the Israeli government to increase the quota, fearing the law would expire before the job was completed. In counterpart, the Israelis pressed the Baghdad agents to see to it that young men were selected in priority. But young Jewish men, like all other young Iraqi men, were obligated to serve in the Iraqi army for a two-year compulsory service. They could obtain a dispensation by paying 50 Dinars (50 Pounds Sterling, then equivalent to $200), and serve only for three months. High school graduates were exempted from the two-year draft, but had to serve for six months in the military academy for officers.

However, this hurdle was promptly resolved. The committee of Jews appointed by the Iraqi government and which was under the orders of the Zionist leaders in Israel, contacted the draft commander of the Iraqi army and discussed with him the possibility of exempting young Jews from the draft. Before the meeting they had been briefed about the commander's private life, and among other things, were told that the officer had a mistress. They took advantage of this point and promised him a villa for the woman.

The next day it was decreed that the draft terms would not apply any more to those who had already given up their Iraqi citizenship (there were 4,000 such young men), and as for the others, nothing had changed. They were still obligated to serve two years in the Iraqi army or pay the 50 Dinars if they wanted to be exempted from serving.

These activities were conducted openly, and the agents were careless about taking even minimal precautions, as though they were in a friendly country.

The year 1950 was over, and only two months were left before the law was to due to expire. The activists worked relentlessly to convince those who were hesitating about giving up their citizenship to do so, but by the end of 1950 less than 60,000 people had registered, and out of these the number of immigrants did not exceed 32,000, including those who immigrated via Iran. [See Hayyim Cohen's book, *Pe'ilut Ha'Tsiyonit be-Irak (The Zionist Activities in Iraq)*, Jerusalem: Ha'Sifriyah Ha'Tsiyonit, 1969.]

The situation did not change in January 1951. The agents, helpless in the face of Jewish apathy, kept sending telegrams, putting pressure and warning that the situation was terrible and prone to disaster. But word from Israel was that it would not increase the immigration quota from Iraq, despite the pressure from those in charge of immigration in other areas. The agents also insisted that Israel operate an airline other than the Near East Air Transport Company. Yet Israel did not change its preference for that airline whose planes could carry 106 passengers per day, or under better conditions, double the number of its flights.

The Iraqi government agreed not to force the planes bound for Lod to first stop in Cyprus, but allowed them to go directly to Israel. The Zionist agents in Iraq were anxious to complete the job before the end of February 1951. So, what was there left for them to do when Israel was not responsive to their pleas?

At 7 PM on January 14, 1951, the Masouda Shem-Tov Synagogue was jammed. There were also many people standing in the front yard when a grenade was thrown at them. The grenade first struck a high-voltage cable and broke it. The failing cable struck a Jewish teenager, Yitzhak Elmacher, who died instantly from electrocution. The explosion killed two other people and injured 31, one of whom critically. The wounded were taken to hospitals for treatment. Later, it was learned that the number of injured was actually higher.

After the grenade was thrown, the pace of registration increased dramatically, as Yosef Me'ir, a prominent Zionist leader in Baghdad wrote on page 205 in his book *Me-'ever la midbar (Road in the Desert*, Tel Aviv: Ma'arakhot, 1973). The Near East Air Transport Company accelerated its efforts and managed to fly 600 to 700 individuals every day.

For most Iraqi Jews, the explanation that prevailed was that the grenade was thrown at the synagogue in order to stimulate the pace of immigration. Thirty thousand individuals who had already given up their citizenship had yet to leave Iraq. The law was due to expire on March 8, 1951 and precious little time was left, as it was feared that there would not be an extension in the deadline.

Many Iraqi Ministers publicly raised the question of why the Jews could not go on living in Iraq, as they had so far. They began to pressure the government to stop its policy of harassing the Jews. The communist and socialist parties (Socialist People's Party) produced leaflets arguing that the government was acting in cahoots with Israel by making life miserable for the Jews in Iraq (massive dismissals from government offices and economic hardship), forcing them to have no choice but to leave Iraq. In fact, a reasonable explanation for the bomb thrown at the Masouda Shem-Tov Synagogue was to shatter the hopes of those Jews who did not wish to leave. The bomb effectively put an end to their dreams, and only a few were left of the 30,000. individuals who had given up their citizenship. A year and a half later, only 5,000 Jews had remained in Iraq.

A Storm among Jews

As soon as the news spread about the attack on the Masouda Shem-Tov Synagogue, the police embarked on an unprecedented effort to find the culprits, especially since it turned out that the number of casualties was higher than previously thought. Three people had already died. The police called military experts to examine the shrapnel. Its experts determined that the Miels Company in England had manufactured them *(Liwa Al-Istiklal*, January 15, 1951). The grenade that was thrown was identical to those the police later found in the storehouses of the Zionist movement. But after the explosion, the trail in the police investigation went cold.

There were calls for the government to resign because of its incompetence. Among them, the Iraqi Jews began to whisper about the role played by the Zionist movement immediately after the attack and pointing to Mordechai Ben-Porat as being responsible for the bombing.

Let's Get Some Fresh Air

In April 1951, Israeli agent Yehuda Taggar arrived in Baghdad. The former military governor of Acco was sent to run the Ha'modiyein branch of the Zionist movement. Taggar's European face and ginger hair were unusual in Iraq. He also came under a very dubious cover. He was carrying Iranian identification papers, even though he could not speak a single

word of Farsi. His assumed names were "Ismael Ben-Mehdi" and "Sugra Salhoon." "Mehdi" could have somehow passed, but "Salhoon" was a poor choice for a last name.

The name Mehdi and the Iranian identification card indicated that the bearer was Shiite. Most Shiites are observant, and some are fanatically so. Nonetheless, Ben-Porat put his friend up in an Armenian hotel in the Boustan El-Khas area. That place served pork, which would have revolted any Shiite. Moreover, had Ben-Porat demanded that his associate stay indoors and work behind closed doors, this might have been sufficient. But Ben-Porat was totally careless about precautionary measures from the day he arrived in Baghdad, and his actions with Taggar were no different. He also dismissed the fact that thousands of Palestinian refugees had come to live in Baghdad, and some of them might have easily recognized the former military governor of Acco.

On May 22, 1951, Ben-Porat invited Taggar to go out and get some fresh air. Ben-Porat drove him in his black Vauxhall taxicab to a large department store, Orosdi-Back, where many clerks of Palestinian origin worked. One of these clerks recognized Yehouda Taggar and called the police who came and arrested Taggar and Ben-Porat. They found in Taggar's possession a notebook with the telephone numbers of all the activists and intelligence officers of the Zionist movement in Iraq.

The police captured all of them, including Robert Henry Rodney who promptly began to sing. He fingered Yehuda Taggar as an Israeli Defense Forces Officer and an agent of Israeli intelligence in Iraq. Since Taggar turned out to be completely unable to speak or even understand Farsi, he failed to sell the story that he was an Iranian citizen. Taggar broke down and was immediately sent to jail. Ben-Porat claimed he was just a taxi driver, and that he was "driving this tourist about whom he knew nothing." Four days later, he was released on a 500 Dinars bail, paid in cash by the Zionist movement. However, he was required to show up for another trial. He had beaten a drunken motorcyclist who had hit his taxi.

At that moment, a military officer intervened and took Ben-Porat to a police station, where a criminal file was opened against him. His associates in the Movement advised him to leave Iraq immediately, but he insisted on showing up at the trial.

At the tribunal, Ben-Porat was arrested again. His associates contacted Jamal Baban, an attorney of Kurdish origin and former Minister of the Interior, who convinced the judge to release him, claiming the police did not honor the orders of the court. The judge who was unaware that Ben-Porat (known to the authorities as "Nissim Moshe") had been arrested on other charges, telephoned the police and ordered his immediate release. Before his release, he was taken for fingerprinting to a different police station. On the way he escaped from his police escort near El- Shorja marketplace, a place that was crowded at all times of day. He then sought shelter in the house of some friends and awaited instructions from Israel.

More Bombs

As a matter of fact, several other bombs exploded. On March 19, 1951, a bomb exploded at the American Cultural Center in Baghdad, and wounded several people. A similar event occurred in Egypt. Another bomb exploded on May 5, 1951, near the offices of the Lawee Company. The damage was not severe. An explosive charge blew up a month later, on June Sth between the offices of *The Baghdad Times* newspaper and the Mayo department store, causing minor damage. Another charge blew up on June

9th near the Al-Rafidayn and the agency of Stanley Shashua, a Jewish automobile importer. This was the last explosion of the series.

Is there any wonder if Ben-Porat left Iraq on June 16, 1951 ? Shalom Salih Shalom, who was in charge of the weapons storehouses was arrested on June 10th, while he was at the Masouda Shem-Tov Synagogue. The police arrested many more people and put them on trial. Yosef Basri and Shalom Salih Shalom were sentenced to death. Robert Henry Rodney and Yehuda Taggar were sentenced to five years and life sentences respectively.

Iraqi President Abd El-Karim Kassem released Taggar in 1959, after Israel threatened Kassem that it would reveal information about Kassem's ties with Israel in the years 1950-52. In those days, Kassem had been the head of an anti-British resistance group in Iraq and had sent a delegation to meet with Israelis. It included Fatma El-Dagistani (a popular leftist), Shakir Samara (a Palestinian from Dunaba, a village near Tulkarem) and Zion Ben-Ephraim (an Iraqi Jewish merchant).

Kassem believed at that time that Israel, having recently freed itself from British rule, would be willing to assist an Arab liberation movement to free itself from the British yoke. Hence, the delegation was sent to Turkey to meet Israeli representatives. The Iraqis asked the Israelis to assist the Iraqi resistance and allow it to set up a secret radio station and training camp for guerilla warfare. Israel turned down their request and threatened to denounce them to the British intelligence. The delegates became scared and left Turkey. They later contacted the Egyptians after the revolution of July 23, 1952.

Kassem was worried that his secret dealings with the Israelis would be revealed, so he sent one of his aides to fetch Yehuda Taggar and take him to the airport. He was flown to Europe and later returned to Israel.

Weapons Storehouses in Synagogues

Following the lists of names that were found in Yehuda Taggar's pockets, many Zionist activists were arrested. During his interrogation, possibly under duress or torture, Shalom Salih Shalom began to cooperate with his interrogators.

He told them about twelve storehouses of weapons and ammunition (there were originally thirty-one of these storehouses), in which were found hundreds of hand grenades, tens of guns and submachine guns, explosive charges, detonators, chemicals for assembling Molotov cocktails, incendiary grenades and gas grenades. The investigators compared the detonators and shrapnel found after the explosions with those found in the storehouses. They turned out to be identical.

Attorney Yosef Bash was arrested in the house of Sassoon Sadik, while the police were hunting a Zionist activist, Yosef Khabaza. The police officers found Bash hiding in a closet. Next to him was a red leather bag that was taken to the police laboratory for examination. It was found to contain traces of explosives. The Interior Minister, who was in charge of the Police, invited representatives of foreign countries and presented them with the signed confessions of the suspects. The police also showed them the weapons and other items that were involved in the attacks, such as bombs and explosive charges (see *Ropes of Sand: America's Failure in the Middle East*, by Wilbur Crane Eveland. New York: W.W. Norton, 1980).

The Iraqi people were stunned by all these revelations. No one could understand why the Jews had to stockpile such a large amount of illegal weapons, since Iraqi Jews, like all other citizens, were allowed to carry licensed weapons.

The yellow press assailed the Jews and took the opportunity to get even with the democratic forces, which were calling for brotherhood and equality. Some newspapers even received large payoffs from the Zionist movement in order to publish anti-Jewish propaganda, and to demand that the Jews be expelled from Iraq.

The atmosphere that ensued was nauseating, and many Jews who had intended to stay in Iraq changed their minds. Given the dismal situation, they applied to have their citizenship revoked. Not all considered going to Israel, but since they had no citizenship at all, they could not go anywhere except Israel.

Testimony of Shalom Salih Shalom

June 10, 19S I

Question: Where were you born and raised, and what did you do since your childhood?

Answer: *I* was born in 1929 in Baghdad. My father's name is Salih Shalom. He is from Mosul in the North and he moved to Baghdad. My mother's name is Freha Bat-Shalom. She is from Baghdad. She died nearly 18 years ago. My father gave up his citizenship and left for Palestine last year.

I first went to the Jewish community school and then to the Menashe Salih School where I completed elementary school. Afterwards, I worked with my father in his clothing store.

After a while, I left my father's store and worked as a shoemaker in the Derby store, and later in the Djila shoe store. About a year ago, I began to work in the Section of Denaturalization at the Meir Tuweik Synagogue. I was the supervisor of the storeroom for office necessities and kitchen supplies, such as sugar, tea, etc.

I took advantage of this opportunity to give up my own citizenship (File #19198), but I stayed here and did not go to Palestine. The Community Committee would not allow me to leave until all the Jews who gave up their citizenship had left because they needed me to run the storeroom and the kitchen.

As I said earlier, during my work at the community offices, I met Yosef Khabaza who often came to visit his brother Salim, who was the Secretary of the Executive Committee of the community. That is how we became friends. He would also come to the Meir Tuweik Synagogue to watch the activities.

On the night of the 5th to the 6th of June, 1951, I left the Masouda Shem-Tov Synagogue. As every night, I went to a candy shop near the Cinema Ghazi for a glass of buttermilk. As I left the candy shop, I ran into Yosef Khabaza. He asked me to go with him and say goodbye to one of his friends who was about to leave Iraq. We then went to the Miami Taxi Company.

We stayed there for awhile and then got into a green Hudson taxi driven by a Jewish chauffeur, Abraham. Yosef asked him to take us to El-Karda El-Sharguia neighborhood. As we reached the Abu Kalam neighborhood, Yosef asked the driver to park the car near a certain house. Yosef and I got out of the taxi and Yosef opened the door of the house with a key that he pulled out of his pocket. We entered. There was no one inside. Yosef went into one of the rooms and took out a red leather bag that closed with a zipper and a lock. We then left the house after Yosef locked the door, and got back into the car. Yosef then told the driver to go to another house near a gas station in the El-Alawiya neighborhood.

The house faced the main street, and when we reached it, Yosef got out of the car, entered the house alone and came out a few minutes later. He approached the car and told me to return to the house where he had taken the red leather bag. He wanted me to bring him a jar of Ditol that was in the bathroom medicine cabinet. He gave me the house key and I left in the same car. I retrieved the Ditol and returned. I then asked the driver to ring the bell. Yosef came down, took the jar and then went back inside the house. Nearby, a black car with private license plates was parked. Yosef came out, got in it and rode towards a side street. He parked it and came back towards us. He got into our taxi and asked the driver to drive slowly on the main street toward the Bab El-Shargui neighborhood.

When we left the house, I noticed that Yosef was holding an object wrapped in a newspaper. As the car slowed down, Yosef opened the window and tossed a black object, a little bigger than a chicken egg that was wrapped in the newspaper. When we arrived near to the Miami Taxi Company, Yosef and I got out of the car and started to walk. I asked Yosef: "What about the friend you wanted to see?" He answered: "I don't want to see him anymore. Besides, I don't think he is at home." We continued to walk on the street in the direction of Bab El-Shargui.

As we were walking, Yosef began to tell me about the attacks that had occurred previously in Baghdad. He made clear to me that he was the one who had tossed the grenade on the Café Dar El-Beyda, on the evening of April 8, 1950.

He told me he had tossed the grenade while riding in a car. He said the grenade was meant to rush the Jews into giving up their citizenship and going to Palestine. He also said that up until then, only 160 people had given up their citizenship.

After the grenade was tossed, the number of those who wished to immigrate rose sharply. Yosef made it clear to me that it was he who tossed the grenade at the front of the Masouda Shem-Tov Synagogue.

He said he was hiding near a small intersection nearby, and after tossing the grenade he got into a car and rode in a narrow alley towards the main street. He said there were casualties, one of whom was a Jew from Suleimaniyah, and another was a young boy.

He said the goal was the same as with the first grenade. As for the explosion at the American Cultural Center, on March 19, 1951 in the Bab El-Aga neighborhood, Yosef Khabaza said at approximately 10:30 AM, he rode there. He'parked his car at one end of El-Amine Street and continued on foot. He found no one at the entrance. He then tossed the grenade, went back to the car and rode on El-Amine Street towards Ghazi Street.

He also told me about the bomb that exploded near the Stanley Shashua Company. This bomb had a delay switch and was due to explode at 3 AM. He added that when he went to drop the bomb, he pretended to be inspecting the door locks at the company entrance, while the car was parked nearby. As we were walking and talking, I heard an explosion. I asked him what it was and he said it was not the cannon of Ramadan, but rather a bomb that he had placed next to the customs office, near the El-Rafidayn Bank. He also told me it was he who had planted the bomb when we drove through the Bab El-Shargui neighborhood.

Yosef told me he was going to hide because the police were after him, and he had decided to flee to Palestine. That is when he told me: "Let's go visit the friend I told you about."

I must add that when we were driving towards the Miami Taxi Company, Yosef used a public telephone on El-Samka Street to call Salim Mouallern who lives in the El-Batawin neighborhood. We then proceeded to

the Miami Taxi Company. There again he called Salim Mouallem on the company telephone. After talking to him, he told me: "Go to Salim Mouallem's house and bring him over. Yosef (Basri) will later join us in another car." I went to Salim Mouallem's house with the driver who followed Yosef Khabaza's instructions. Salim Mouallern came out and got in the car. We then went to the Adil School where Yosef Khabaza caught up with us, approached our car and asked Salim to join him in the other car.

I was tired and wanted to go home, but Yosef told me to stay with them a little longer. Then Yosef dismissed Abraham, the driver who took me to Salim Mouallem's house. The three of us, Yosef Khabaza, Salim Mouallem and I got in the other car. Yosef and Salim were discussing something, but I was unable to hear what they were saying.

We drove again towards Bab El-Chargui. I was tired and I kept drowsing. I only woke up when the car made sharp turns. At 3 AM, Yosef got out of the car near the end of El-Mashjar Street, which leads to the police academy. I continued to ride with Salim Mouallem. We drove him home, and then the driver took me to the Masouda Shem-Tov Synagogue to sleep. Before saying goodbye to Salim, Yosef told him he would call him the next morning to ask him whether "the last plane took off." If Salim answered the phone, it would mean he was still at large. Otherwise, the police would have arrested him.

The next morning, Yosef Khabaza came to the Masouda Shem-Tov Synagogue carrying a suitcase. He signed up for a flight under the name "Naji Ephraim Yaakov." At 3 PM, he was weighed with his suitcase and told the passengers they would be driven to the airport at 3:30 PM. The last time I saw Yosef, he was getting into one of the cars that took passengers to the airport. That was on June 6, 1951.

The testimony was read to Shalom Salih Shalom who signed it, under the direction of the Judge of the El-Ratsafa District, on June 16, 1951. The Judge added a comment:

In his testimony, the accused Shalom Salih Shalom admitted that the accused Yosef Murad Khabaza confessed to him that he had tossed the bombs that exploded at various locations in Baghdad. He made abundantly clear that the man had told him what the motives of his actions were. I then saw fit to find out how Yosef Khabaza came to confess to him, what was the extent of their cooperation and where the explosives used by Yosef Khabaza came from. I added this to the transcript:

Addendum to the Testimony of the Accused Shalom Salih Shalom

Question: You testified that Yosef Khabaza confessed to you that it was he who tossed the bombs that exploded in the places you mentioned in your testimony. Did the man tell you where he obtained the bombs? Did he tell you whether he has any hidden somewhere? Did he tell you where he hid them?

Answer. Yosef Khabaza confessed to me that a man named Naiem, whose family name he did not mention, had purchased a large quantity of bombs and other weapons, such as guns, automatic weapons and explosives from a British officer who ranks above major. Then Naiern fled to Palestine because of his connection to the officer in question. No more weapons were purchased since.

Yosef Khabaza told me these weapons were purchased to protect Baghdad's Jews, and they were spread in a number of houses in the city, and that a number of people had learned to use them. Most of them have

left Iraq, whether by giving up their citizenship, or by fleeing. He then decided to gather these weapons and hide them. He asked me to help him hide them and promised me money.

Yosef Khabaza prepared some concrete, cast and barrels, and took them to the Ezra David Synagogue. He gave some money to the old attendant, whose name I do not know, and who has also left Iraq after renouncing his citizenship. Yosef Khabaza had asked him to leave the synagogue in the morning and not to return until the evening. All this happened fifteen days before this past Passover.

He came in the morning, and asked me to dig two holes, one in a shed that was located in the synagogue yard and the other on the left hand side, next to the wall. I dug while Yosef went out to get the weapons and the bombs in suitcases. After he brought all the weapons he intended to hide, he helped me with the digging. When we were done, he installed a barrel in each hole and filled them with weapons, ammunition, guns and the grenades. Then he closed the barrels, covered them with earth and replaced the floor tiles. We completed the job at 3:30 PM. After that, I left the synagogue and went back to my regular job.

A month after Passover, Yosef Khabaza asked me to go to the Hakham Haskel Synagogue, in the neighborhood of Tahat El-Takia. He told me he wanted to hide more bombs, guns and submachine guns in the synagogue.

He told me to get in touch with Abraham, the synagogue's attendant. Yosef Khabaza gave him money every month. When I told the attendant my name, he opened the gate and let me in. Inside, I found four barrels, two of average size, and two large ones. Yosef Khabaza had already brought in a large quantity of weapons and ammunition and bombs. He later arrived with three movers, each carrying suitcases loaded with weapons. After the men left, we closed the doors of the synagogue and began to work, Yosef, Abraham and myself. Each time we finished digging a hole, Yosef would install a barrel in it and fill the barrel with weapons. Then he would seal it, cover it with earth and replace the floor tiles. The job was finished at 4 PM.

While we were working at the Hakham Haskel Synagogue, Yosef Khabaza told me there were two caches of weapons he was considering relocating. One was a house in the Faraj Allah Abu Dow-Dow. He was thinking about removing the weapons from that house and hiding them somewhere else. The other cache was in the Masouda Shem-Tov Synagogue, but he was undecided about this one. About two months later, I went to Yosef Khabaza's house near the police academy. Yosef showed me three weapons stockpiles in his house, full with weapons, bombs and other explosives.

I can take you to all the places I have mentioned. In addition to what I said about Yosef Khabaza and his activities, I can say that he was constantly in touch with Salim Mouallem and Yosef Basri. Yosef Khabaza told me he no longer wanted to relocate the weapons that were hidden in the house in the Abou Dow-Dow area, because he thought the location was safe after two years had passed. He said a woman still lived in that house. If I recall, he said she was the sister or the aunt of the midwife Masouda.

Testimony of Robert Henry Rodney

I was born to German parents who suffered greatly from the Nazi regime and left for Holland. I left with them, and I later joined the British army intelligence. I rose to the rank of major. I did most of my service in India.

I arrived in London with a British passport. In 1950 I went to Paris. There, I stopped at the Israeli embassy where I was issued an Israeli passport with which I came to Israel.

I joined the Foreign Service Department of the Mossad, which was at the time headed by Asher Ben Nathan and his assistant Adin. They questioned me about my views and motives and then they offered me to get involved in a spying assignment in the Arab state of Iraq.

I accepted and I was sent to Tehran, Iran's capital where there was a branch of the Jewish Agency. I stayed there for several months so as to absorb all the information they had gathered about Iraq that could be useful in my mission.

The necessary "covers" were arranged for me in Tehran, and I left for Baghdad as the representative of two British Companies based in Manchester, England:

1. Amson Mills Company, a textile exporter.
2. El-Tam Company, a British radio sets exporter.

I presented my British passport in Baghdad, and was received well. I began to mingle with Baghdad's high society. At first, I stayed at the Hotel Zia, and later I rented a nice house in the posh neighborhood of Kardat El-Basha. I made contact with well-known merchants and I gave parties and banquets to which I invited all of Baghdad's VIPs. Later on I worked on establishing friendly ties with the leaders of the tribes and the intelligentsia, so as to be surrounded with a circle of peace-loving people, with the purpose of getting them involved when the time comes. I consider myself a "Peace envoy" from Israel.

My real name is Robert Henry Rodney, but people also know me by my nickname Rodney El- Hindi ("Rodney the Indian").

Investigator's Comments on the Accused Robert Henry Rodney

The accused Robert Henry Rodney was arrested on May 24, 1951, after his name and address and telephone number were found in the papers of the accused Salhoon (Yehuda Taggar).

Copies of telegrams he had sent overseas were found in the possession of the accused Rodney, as well as telegrams he received. One of these says: "Go to Tehran immediately, and wire your address." When we asked the accused about the telegram, he said: "This is warning that I must leave Iraq."

The investigators also found.in the apartment of the accused a copy of a telegram he sent to Max Beinit, where he wrote: "From Rodney to Beinit: we are out of ropes, send another shipment." At first, the accused denied any knowledge of this telegram, but later recanted, said it meant they were out of money, and asked Beinit (his superior) to send them more money.

When we placed the accused and Salhoon in the same room, Rodney pointed to Salhoon and said he was an Israeli officer whose name was Yehuda Taggar, and who came to Iraq on an intelligence mission. The accused Rodney also said that at first he financed Yehuda from his own budget, after they met at the Hotel Zia. But later on, he began to receive specific funding for Yehuda Taggar (a.k.a. Salhoon). Rodney would spend vast sums of money for parties and social gatherings where Iraqi public figures were invited. Rodney also paid for Yehuda Taggar's hotel room when Taggar was away from Baghdad.

Update on Robert Henry Rodney

When Rodney arrived in Iraq with a British passport, the Iraqi secret services contacted the British authorities to verify the validity of his passport. The Foreign Office lied to the Iraqis and told them it was valid when in fact it was false. This was due to a secret agreement between Israel and England.

Robert Henry Rodney, code-named "Yaniv," was released from jail after five years of hard labor. He then went to Europe before going to Israel. He contacted the Mossad, but the Mossad shunned him. This was the fourth blow for him. The first blow was his arrest in Iraq. The second blow was when his wife cheated on him and then divorced him to marry one of his friends. Third, during his absence, his son had died. That destroyed his morale.

Rodney left Israel and met a wonderful woman. He began to rebuild himself economically and psychologically. When all seemed well, he was stricken with cancer. His wife stayed at his side throughout his illness until he died shortly after in Israel.

Testimony of the Accused Ismael Mehdi Salhoon

My real name is Yehuda Ben-Meir Menashe El-Taggar. I was born in Jerusalem. I served in the British army during the British Mandate. After the British departed from Palestine, I was transferred to the Israeli army, and I later joined the Israeli intelligence.

I went to Iran with an Israeli passport, but in Tehran, my supervisor Max Beinit gave me a passport identifying me as Ismael Ben-Mehdi and Sugra Salhoon. After a short period of activity in Iran, I traveled on ground transportation to Iraq. I arrived in Baghdad on February 11, 1951. I rented a room at the Hotel Zia where I met Robert Henry Rodney. Then I moved to a boarding house owned by Mrs. Kabon in Bustan El-Kan, an area in the neighborhood of El-Batawin. Before I came to Iraq, I was provided with the addresses of people who could help me with my assignments.

When I arrived in Baghdad, I got in touch with Yosef Murad Khabaza and Zeyd (Fuad Zion) who had visited Israel in the past, and then returned to Iraq. These two men and others would provide me with reports on various subjects, and I would review them before passing them on to Max Beinit. Some were weekly reports, other were monthly reports, depending on their importance. Some seemed important enough to me and I would immediately send them to Teheran through the Iranian driver Farid who was traveling on the Tehran-Baghdad route. (Farid vanished as soon as the network was discovered.) Another way was to send the reports to P.O. Box 57802 in Tehran or to another address.

Things went on like this until April 9, 1951, at which time I went to Rome to meet with Max Beinit. I discussed with him the expansion of the network in Baghdad. Among other things, I told Max that operations went rather smoothly in Baghdad, and that it was easy to recruit local operatives. At that time, I was passing on reports pertaining to the economic and military situation in Iraq. I returned to Baghdad in late April, and went back to Mrs. Kabon's boarding house.

During my absence, Rodney paid my room. I had prepared a number of reports during this time and until I was arrested. But I had not had a chance to send them before you found them in my room.

The Investigator's Comments on the Accused Yehuda Taggar

When the questioning of the accused began, he attempted to argue that his name was Ismael Ben-Mehdi and Sugra Salhoon and that he was a Moslem and an Iranian citizen. A small Koran was found in his pocket, but he spoke no Farsi.

During the questioning of the accused Robert Henry Rodney, we learned that the man who posed as Ismael Salhoon was an Israeli officer who came to Iraq on a spying mission. Rodney told us other things as well about the accused.

When his room was searched, maps of various areas of Iraq were found. Among them was a map of Baghdad and its vicinities. When the so-called Salhoon was arrested, a local citizen who goes by the name of Nissim Moshe was also arrested and released on bail. As the investigation proceeded, it was learned that Nissim Moshe used various names (Murad Kissas, Mordechai Ben-Porat), and that he had fled.

Comments on the Accused Yehuda Taggar

According to the materials in the trial dossier, Taggar at first denied who he was and persisted in his story for a few days. But when Robert Henry Rodney was brought to the same room, he pointed to Taggar and said:

This man is an Israeli. He is an IDF officer. His real name is Yehuda Taggar and he came here on a spying mission. He speaks Arabic as well as English and Hebrew.

Taggar had no choice but to confess. He revealed his real name and his position. He also said he had pursued studies on the Middle East and Arabic.

During one of the court sessions, the presiding judge asked the accused men whether they had anything to say about the investigation. Yehuda Taggar said he wanted to speak. He was allowed to speak, and he said:

"I am guilty!"

For the first time, he began to speak Arabic, despite the fact that his testimony had been given in English, and that he had denied having any knowledge of the Arabic language when the investigation began.

Yehuda Taggar Does Have a Father!

In the early 1970s, I (the author) would frequently give talks about the social divide in the Israeli society, and explore ways to eliminate it. I spoke mostly in kibbutzim, where the freethinking youths are hungry to hear about current events. Talking about the social divide involved among other things some details about the life of Oriental Jews in the countries of their origin, and when I happened to describe the lives of Iraqi Jews, two questions would inevitably be asked of me:

1. Why were the two young men Shalom Salih Shalom and Yosef Ibrahim Bash sentenced to death, since they were only small fry, whereas the big fish, Yehuda Taggar, a spy and a high officer in the Haganah was treated with leniency?
2. Why was Taggar released by President Abd El-Karim Kassem?

These questions are relevant and have been asked by many members of the Iraqi community as well. But up to now, no answers have been given. Today, after 37 years of research, I have found the answers.

Why was Taggar Given a Light Sentence?

During the questioning of the suspect, Yehuda Taggar was placed face to face with the Palestinian store clerk who had previously known him as the military governor of Acco. He could no longer deny who he really was. Not to mention that his friend Robert Henry Rodney (Yaniv) also identified him as an Israeli Defense Forces officer who came to Iraq to spy.

Iraqi public opinion became agitated when several days later large caches of weapons were discovered. The Iraqi public demanded that maximum sentences be meted out. The El-Istiklal Party, a nationalistic party with fascist tendencies, attempted to organize demonstrations with Palestinian refugees, but the police suppressed them highhandedly.

The newspapers continuously published reports on the investigation, as well as excerpts from the confessions of Yosef Basri, Shalom Salih Shalom and others. The reports focused mainly on the two spies Yehuda Taggar and Robert Henry Rodney and their confessions were given widespread publicity.

Yet, the Iraqi government which would have declared a state of emergency and set up martial courts in less serious cases, in this instance, did not take these steps. The civilian legal system was left to deal with it, under the current legislation. It was clear to most of the cabinet ministers that the two spies would be condemned to hang from the gallows, once their guilt was established.

In those days, the Israeli government and the world Zionist movement applied strong pressure on Great Britain to intercede and ask the Iraqi government to be lenient with the suspects, Yehuda Taggar and Robert Henry Rodney. Several days after the Iraqis began to suspect Rodney's British passport, which was counterfeited by the Mossad, England announced that the passport bearing the name "Robert Henry Rodney" was genuine, and that the man was a British citizen.

Not a single word was said about the other suspects, except for Yehuda Taggar and Robert Henry Rodney, though the names of all the suspects had been radioed to Israel. In addition, the Movement issued a warning that a number of suspects were facing the death sentence.

In those days, David Ben-Gurion and Moshe Sharett were engaged in a major effort to get Israel to be included in the British Commonwealth. On February 19, 1951, when General Robertson, the commander of all British forces in the Middle East, visited Israel, Ben-Gurion begged him to intercede with the British government so it would accept Israel as a member of the British Commonwealth. So far as Britain was concerned, Israel was serving its interests in the Middle East. For this reason, Great Britain took action and confirmed the genuine nature and authenticity of Robert Henry Rodney's passport. It also took action to keep Yehuda Taggar from being given the capital punishment.

Taggar knew ahead of time what sentence he was going to receive. The investigating judge personally invited him to his office and told him that due to the pressure from the Israeli government and other world Jewish institutions, he would not be in the first group to be sentenced (to death). It was so despite the fact that public opinion, as well as ranking Iraqi personalities demanded that he be hanged. The judge made it abundantly clear to him that he himself was nothing but a civil servant, and that he must follow the orders of his superiors.

Yehuda Taggar would not be hanged, but as for the sentence he would receive, the ball was in his court. The judge promised him that should he change his mind and tell who was the commander in charge of the espionage network in Iraq, he would be included in the group of convicts who would be sentenced to only five years in prison. Yehuda knew by then that Mordechai Ben-Porat had already fled from Iraq. For a moment he felt a certain temptation to put the whole truth before the judges and profit from the bargain. But had he done so, it might have worsened his situation and that of the others. During the entire questioning, he claimed he did not know who the commander was. If he had told his name, his interrogators would want him to disclose more things than he wished to tell. He thus continued to stand by his earlier claim, knowing that he was sealing his fate: life in jail and hard labor.

There is not much to add to what has already been said. Israel began to act on behalf of the other prisoners only after they were sentenced to death or to life in prison, in late December 1951. Israel argued that the confessions had been obtained under duress and torture, and the entire trial had been staged. But none of the British statesmen were impressed by these arguments. The British Embassy in Baghdad replied that the trial was conducted with due process. Hence it can be concluded that Yehuda Taggar and Robert Henry Rodney received enormous backing from Israel and her allies.

After the two were sentenced, they were transferred to a jail reserved for political prisoners where they enjoyed all the privileges such prisoners were entitled. Robert Henry Rodney got out of jail five years later and left for Europe before going to Israel. But the Mossad, which had employed him in the past, shunned him for ratting on Yehuda Taggar to the Iraqi police. Rodney also found that his family had broken down while he was away in Iraq.

Yehuda Taggar continued his life as a political prisoner. When the coup headed by Abd El- Karim Kassem succeeded in July 14, 1958, all political prisoners were released, except for him. It was then that Israel began to act. Warnings were sent to Abd El-Karim Kassern but he ignored them. Only then did Israel decide to use its secret weapon.

The Release of Yehuda Taggar

After the 1958 coup in Iraq, relations between Iraq and Egypt began to deteriorate because Abd El-Karim Kassem refused to join Egypt in an Arab Union with Syria. The Egyptian radio lambasted the new Iraqi leader, ridiculing his name and his career. That was the moment when the Mossad agents decided to make Kassem bend. In the years 1950-52, an Iraqi underground organization headed by Kassem tried to obtain Israel's help in setting up a training camp for guerilla warfare and a radio station over the hills of Jerusalem. Kassem wanted to broadcast to the Iraqi people messages against the despotic and treasonous rule of Nouri El-Said and his associates.

During one of the meetings in Turkey, the three delegates in Kassem's group gave Israeli representatives the names of the leaders of the underground group. Among the Iraqi delegates was Shakir Samara, a Palestinian living in exile in Baghdad, and Fatma El-Dagistani, a popular figure in Iraqi democratic circles. In 1958, the entire list of names was sent to Kassern with the warning that if Yehuda Taggar were not released within a specified number of days, the list of names would be released to Radio Cairo.

Kassem looked at the material and remembered the delegation he sent to Israel. He had naively believed the Jewish State that had "liberated" itself two years earlier from Great Britain would assist other nations to regain their freedom. Unfortunately for Kassem, Ben-Gurion was not interested. In fact, Ben-Gurion was busy trying to tie Israel to the Western power bandwagon. The Americans had disappointed him, so he turned to the British, asking that Israel be included in the British Commonwealth. That is the reason why Ben-Gurion turned down Kassem's request. After two and a half years of prodding Israel, Kassem issued an order to sever all ties with the Israelis. After Kassem's successful coup, the Israeli weekly *Ha'olam Hazé* reported this story in a series of extended reports (August-September 1958).

The recollections infused Kassem with some flexibility. He realized that Israel possessed a significant amount of material regarding these meetings and decided to release Yehuda Taggar immediately. He instructed his aide to fetch the Israeli spy from his jail. The aide left right away and introduced himself to the prison warden, requesting that the prisoner be released to his custody. The warden insisted in escorting the prisoner. But when they arrived at the gate of the presidential palace, the aide told the warden to wait outside. The warden complied, as the aide and Yehuda Taggar entered the palace. An hour later, the warden saw the presidential motorcade leave the palace. On board were the president's aide and ... the Israeli spy, Yehuda Taggar. Dumbfounded, the warden followed them in his car to Baghdad international airport. The next day, the Iraqi Defense Minister issued the following announcement that was published in the Iraqi newspapers:

WARNING TO ALL ARAB STATES

The Zionist prisoner, Yehuda Taggar, also known as Ismael Ben-Mehdi and Sugra Salhoon, has completed his prison term after being convicted of espionage and has been expelled from Iraq. All Arab States must be vigilant and must not to give him entry in their territories. His characteristics are ...

This was followed by his hair color, eye color, height, weight, etc. These ads, along with the man's photograph, startled those who recalled that Taggar had been sentenced to life in prison. The Egyptian media made much out of this matter and increased their campaign against the Iraqi President. For days on end they ridiculed Abd El-Karim Kassem over this issue.

When Yehuda Taggar was driven to the Presidential Palace, he was taken to Kassem's office. For about an hour, the President lectured him and told him among other things: "Iraq has no interest in wars. Iraq wants peace!"

Years went by. The families of Yosef Basri and Shalom Salih Shalom suffered from hunger and deprivation. Many of them passed away. The Israeli government ignored them completely, except for a few spokesmen of Iraqi origin who decided to build a memorial for the two men in the town of Or Yehuda, near Lod. A forest was also planted in their names. It was not until later that the government of Israel gave the two dead men the status of "State Victims."

British archives were declassified in the early 1980s. According to excerpts that were published in the Israeli press and according to *Yediot Aharonot*'s senior reporter Yehuda Atlas, it appears that Israel settled for saving the lives of Robert Henry Rodney and Yehuda Taggar. It is a fact

that for these two men Israel took action and began screaming as soon as the investigation began, but said nothing about the others until after they were convicted. Even then, the Israelis approached the British Foreign Office wearing silk gloves. A fair conclusion is that, in an effort to save the lives of Robert Henry Rodney and Yehuda Taggar, the Israeli government sacrificed the two men who were hanged, Yosef Basri and Shalom Salih Shalom. Blessed be their memory.

The author used the following sources:

• "The 20th Century," published by the Israeli Defense Ministry (p. 144).
• *'Ad 'amud Ha'teliyah: parashiyot gevurah shel Ha'mahteret Ha'Tsiyonit be-Irak* ("To the hanging Post") by Yehuda Atlas. Yerushalayim: 'ibed le-Ivrit kalah Yi'gal Moldavski, 1972.
• Issam Sartawi's article in *Ha'olam Haze*, November 23, 1983.
• Arabic newspapers of January 17, 1960: *Al-Zaman* (Issue #6742, p.4) and *Al-Bilad* (Issue #5712, p.4).
• *Haaretz*, January 3 and 4, 1983 (excerpts of declassified British archives).

Confession of Yosef Ibrahim Basri to the Police

June 21, 1951

Yosef Murad Khabaza was one of the organizers of the Zionist movement. His initial task was to teach the Hebrew language and instill Israeli education in the young generation. The activity of the Movement was not limited to language classes. It ranged from military to first aid assistance. Yosef Khabaza was in charge of running all the branches of the movement. All this took place in the years preceding the denaturalization law for the Jews.

When the law was enacted, most of the members of the Movement started to give up their citizenship and go to Israel to the point that only a few were left. Yosef Khabaza stayed behind to run the affairs with some of his helpers, such as Ephraim or Yehezkel Sassoon (also known as "Yehezkel-the-Red") and two young women, Violet, a teacher who worked for the *Alliance Israélite Internationale* (codenamed "Carmelit"), and Susan.

Eventually, Yosef Khabaza was left alone, after everyone else had given up their citizenship and left. He felt lonely and gave up his own citizenship under the name of someone who had already left the country illegally. Then he began to put together the networks after making contact with a man named "Habib." I believe this man, despite his Iraqi citizenship, had really come to Iraq from Israel to redirect the Movement into different activities.

He came to gather information of a general nature about Iraq, which would include all the vital areas of the country, such as the defense, the army, the police, the agriculture, the economy. He was also interested in any additional information which Israel could benefit from, such as getting a picture of Iraq's capabilities in all respects.

Habib counted on Yosef Khabaza in this matter. Kabaza began to make contact with Jewish government workers who could have given information related to their work. Among others, there was:

1. Ezra Heni, an agronomist. He gave him reports about agriculture in Iraq on the day he left for Israel.

2. Shimon Balas, a controller with the Defense Ministry. He gave him information about the Iraqi army.
3. Salim Sadik, the former treasurer of the police administration. He gave him information about his job. He later gave up his citizenship and left for Israel.
4. Eliahu Bechor, controller with the Finance Ministry, who gave him information on the financial situation and on the budget of Iraq. He also gave up his citizenship and left for Israel.
5. Daoud Pasha, an employee at the Basra Railroad Authority. He provided him with all the permits and custom regulations relative to import and export, and other information such as raw materials imports and the population use.
6. A number of teachers employed by the Ministry of Education. He gave him the programs of study in the educational system.

After these sources left Iraq for Israel, Yosef Khabaza began to look for more permanent sources.

His first operation was through me. He contacted Naiem Moshe who introduced us to Mr. Latif, a health worker employed by a drug company. Latif promised to introduce him to a very valuable person. He gave him the description of that person, but did not give him his name. In any case, the introduction was postponed to a later date for reasons Latif did not specify. But before that man was contacted, Latif was arrested. I have no idea whether or not he gave Naiem Moshe's name to the police.

All these operations were carried out by Yosef Khabaza, under Habib's instructions. Habib would give him money to cover for the expense of these operations. Yosef Khabaza packed a few items in a small suitcase and left Iraq. All contact was then lost between the sources operated by Yosef and Habib.

Nonetheless, despite the fact that Yosef Khabaza had gone to Israel, it was not excluded that he might return to Tehran in the future and resume his operations in Iraq from a safe distance.

In conclusion, I repeat this is all I know about Khabaza's activities, except that I forgot to mention he also used the following informants:

• Salim Silkha, an engineer who gave Yosef maps and plans of various installations. Before he left Iraq, he gave up his citizenship.
• Salim Scharkardi, a doctor with the hospital of the Rail Authority. He gave Khabaza information about the hospital, the number of beds, the number of doctors and the maximum capacity of the hospital. He also left after as he renounced his citizenship.
• Edouard Hardon, a physician who left Iraq illegally as soon as he completed his reserve service in the Iraqi army. Yosef Khabaza once asked him in front of me about the drills and the food in the officers' class. The doctor told him that most of his Jewish colleagues at the academy were very happy about their service in the reserve because there was no religious discrimination.

His colleagues and friends called Yosef Khabaza "Johnny," as if it was his real name. That is why some of his friends do not know him as Yosef Khabaza. He also had a code name "Oren" known only to members of the Movement.

As for the mystery man Habib (Mordechai Ben-Porat), Yosef Khabaza spoke often about him and said he was "«the Man» as far as brains and education go." He said he dresses very well and he was closely in touch

with the person who gave instructions, and whom he would supply with the information that he collected. I have already mentioned that Habib was the man who financed Yosef Khabaza.

Where did Habib get the money? I have no idea. Perhaps it came from abroad. Yosef would not share this information with me, nor would he tell me who Habib really was, despite the fact that he would often meet him. There were two other men with code-names Maskil and Danny. I do not know their real names. Yosef never told them to me. Yosef Khabaza told me a few days before his trip that he always worked alone.

My familiarity with him did not grow beyond this point. I myself never approved of Yosef Khabaza's activities, and I advised him a number of times to abandon them. But he always refused, claiming it was too late and he was immersed in them up to his neck, to a point that these activities had become inseparable from his body.

Khabaza did not give me anything and did not show me any written report, except for the Baghdad district map in English. He had several copies of that map, and he said he obtained them from one of his sources. But I never opened the map because my English is poor. I left it along with the other books on my desk where you found it. Yosef Khabaza was in contact with a man named Naji Bahnam who was a typist in the Interior Ministry before he gave up his citizenship.

Now, this is what I know about the five bombings:

1. As far as the first two bombings (the Café Alhambra and the Café Dar El-Beyda), I was a Law School student at that time, completing my senior year. I was devoted to my studies because the final exams were getting near, as they are given on May 15th every year. I did not know Yosef Khabaza at that time, and the only meetings I attended were with my classmates for the purpose of study and discussion.
2. When the bombing at the Masouda Shem-Tov Synagogue occurred, I was at a party at the Cohens. Among the guests were Sassoon Cohen who was a clerk at the Abd El-Aziz Muzaffar Company, and two young women, Simkha and Bertine, who worked at the Prowler Insurance Company. I was in love with Bertine who wanted to marry me. But since she had given up her citizenship, I abandoned the idea. There were other friends of the family, such as Salman Azoulay and Albertin Julie. At that time, I did not have a car. When we heard the explosion, we promptly left in Salman's car, an Austin model. It was Salman's acquaintances who told us the explosion occurred at the Masouda Shem-Tov Synagogue.
3. As far as the bombing at the American Cultural Center, I was sitting in my office when a man named Eliahu Menashe and another man named Kassem came in and told me about it. They also told me that a number of people who were inside the building had died, and that a suspect in the bombing had been arrested.
4. As far as the bombing at the Beit Lawee Company, I was at home when it happened. The next morning, I went to the Tiger Palace Hotel for breakfast. One of the restaurant waiters told me there had been an explosion. I had left my car near the Beit Lawee Company.
5. As far as the bombing near the Stanley Shashua Company and the El-Rafidayn Bank, I was staying at my friend Sassoon Sadik's house that night because we had played poker late. I did not get

out of their house the next day and I was told about the bombing from people who came to visit my hosts.

In all that I told you, I made clear of my whereabouts, as well as those who will testify on my behalf about when the events took place. As for Yosef Khabaza, he was my friend when the latest events in question took place. I met him after the explosions, but he never told me about it. I have no idea who did it. I would repeatedly bring up the story of the explosion, but he insisted he would not tell me anything about this matter.

As for my views on the bombings, I want to say that they took place at a time when there was a drop in Jewish immigration to Israel, especially when it came to obtaining passports and leaving Iraq.

The perpetrators of the acts of sabotage could be either of the following:

1. Jewish extremists who want all Iraqi Jews to go to Israel.
2. Non-Jewish extremists who did not want the Jews to stay in Iraq. The Jews now have a country of their own and their presence has become dangerous for Iraq. They can cause harm by smuggling out all their assets, whether what they have now or will accumulate later, in addition to the information they will communicate (to Israel) on every small or large matter that goes on in Iraq.

As for the activities of Yosef Khabaza:

I. When I first met him, he would wander around the center of Baghdad. I never saw him at El-Karda El-Sharguia or at El-Batawin, not even once. It did not occur to me to inquire about the places where he would go in his free time. He would very often go to his uncle Moshe Hakham Nissim's little shop. I passed by it a number of times, and I saw him there. Usually Yehezkel-the-Red would be with him. That was at least four months after the law on giving up citizenship was passed.
2. At first, when no one gave up his citizenship, he would not go to the Meir Tuweik Synagogue (where people registered to relinquish their Iraqi citizenship). But once groups of Jews started to give up their citizenship, he would often go there, and assist his friends and relatives in filling out the forms. None of this kept him from going to his usual places in Baghdad.
3. Usually he would not eat lunch at home, and he would leave his house early.
4. Once the number of those giving up their citizenship rose and the planes started to fly to Israel, he began to go more often to the Masouda Shem-Tov Synagogue. (That is where people who had already relinquished their Iraqi citizenship would wait their turn to leave.) He would assist a number of travelers, as he claimed. Once I told him "you look very busy." It was a casual question, and I did not have anything specific in mind other than to make conversation. We really had nothing to discuss, since we had nothing in common.
5. After most of his friends and relatives left, his activities slackened, and he began to come to my office more often.

He always went to the following places:

1. His uncle Moshe Hakham Nissim's house, which is located in Upper El-Alawiyah, near a club that is now housing refugees. When

I would encounter Hakham Nissim in the marketplace or at the card games, Yosef Khabaza would sometimes be with him.

2. His uncle Raphael's house, located on the same street as the Masouda Shem-Tov Synagogue.
3. Yehezkel-the-Red's house, which is near his house in Tahat El-Takia.
4. Ephraim's house.
5. Eliahu's house after Ephraim became mentally ill.
6. Dr. Aduor Mahlab's house.
7. My own house.
8. The house of Azouri, a man who is in his fourth year at the engineering school. He once came with him to my office to ask me to co-sign for him at the college.
9. Sassoon Cohen's house.

He would go to the following public places:

1. The Al-Assima Restaurant, the El-Shams Restaurant, the Café Piccadilly and the Café Dar El-Beyda.
2. Occasionally at Café Mashrob El-Hana on Abu Nuwass Street and Café Gardenia.

Yosef Khabaza does not like to smoke or drink. He always looked tired. If he drank only half a bottle of beer, his eyes would close and he would fall asleep.

Of late, he has been coming more often to my office. A month ago, I asked him not to come to my office or my house any more. That was some evening ! But the next morning he came to my office anyway and begged me not to end my friendship with him. He also promised he would stop showing up at my office.

Since the racing season was over, we would commute together to Baghdad in my car. I forgot to mention that I often saw him at the engineer Salim Zilkha's house where he kept going until the Zilkhas left the country. He would also often go to the house of a woman named Carmelit, who lived in Sinak.

— Exact copy of the original, June 28, 1951.

Comments of the judge

I called the accused Yosef Ibrahim Basri to the witness stand, and after I explained to him that I was the judge of the northern district of El-Ratsafa, I began to interrogate him. The testimony of the accused Yosef Ibrahim Basri who lives in the El-Hawidi neighborhood was as follows:

Question: It was demonstrated in the investigation that you have collaborated in the criminal activities of Yosef Khabaza. Therefore I have decided to detain you and search your house on the night of June 10-11, 1951. That same night, I went in person to your house in El-Hawidi with a team of investigators. You were not present at your house. When we looked for the accused Yosef Murad Khabaza who we thought was hiding in the house of Sassoon Sadik in the El-Alawiya neighborhood, it is you who we found there with your bag of clothes. We detained you, and when we brought you back to your house in order to search it in your presence, we found a military map of the city of Baghdad. We also found an empty

cache in a bedroom, next to the entrance. Explain to us what your ties with Yosef Khabaza are. Why you were hiding in Sadik Sassoon's house? How did you come in possession of the map? For what purpose did you get it? What was hidden in the cache?

Response: I first met Yosef Khabaza through his uncle Moshe Hakharn Nissim, a merchant in Khan El-Jerkazi. Yosef Khabaza used to work with his uncle in small shop. But most of the time he was not there. His uncle would claim that his illegal activities were connected to his own organization. All this was prior to the passing of the law that permitted the Jews to renounce their citizenship.

Once the law was enacted, he started to go to markets and shops where Jews would go. He would try to stop them from giving up their citizenship and urge them to boycott the law in question. He printed a number of leaflets and handed them to every Jew inside or outside Baghdad, especially in Basra. But after less than two months, he changed his initial position. He started to act strongly in favor of the Zionist movement and urged Jews to relinquish their Iraqi citizenship.

He started a massive campaign whether by handing out leaflets or through his aides who acted as members of the Movement. They started to teach Hebrew and military training and smuggle people to Iran. He wanted to show Israel his usefulness in training the youth. He was also in position to save them from arrest once the authorities began to go after them when their activities were noticed.

He managed to smuggle as many members of the Movement as he could out of Iraq. He then turned his energy to politics and started to contact most of the Jewish government employees to get information Israel could use, especially employees who would have access to confidential information because of their position. In addition to running his own little "Movement," he made contact with the following people:

1. Ezra Heni, an agricultural supervisor who gave him information about the Department of Agriculture.
2. Salim Zilkha, an engineer.
3. Salih Salman, an engineer.

From the last two men he received information and maps like the one you found in my house and of which Khabaza made a few copies. He did not tell me the purpose of the Baghdad map. He attempted to convince my relatives and myself to give up our Iraqi citizenship, and move to Israel. I refused, but he did manage to convince my sisters Nasima and Freha, who are both married. The first is married to Moshe Menashe and the latter to Sassoon Hakham Yaakov. In fact he sent them and their husbands to Israel at his own expense and because of his influence, managed to move them up on the waiting list to leave the country. Our ties then solidified and he started to come to my house.

Moshe Hakham Nissim, Yosef Khabaza's uncle, decided to leave Iraq illegally. He wanted to sell his car with license plates # 7742. Yosef convinced me to purchase it because it was worth more than I would pay for it. I bought it for 80 Dinars, and the owner fled. Yosef used my car all the time. He would be the driver whenever we rode together. When he finished his work at the shop, he would get into the car with me, and he would talk to me on our way home. Most of what he said was propaganda for Israel and his activities.

He told me that in Israel, the government is a coalition of parties, and no single party bears the responsibility alone. He spoke about agricultural

settlements and kibbutzim, how the division of labor takes place along with profit sharing and how the earth is farmed on the same principles.

He would always encourage young men and women to leave Iraq and join those productive enterprises which are better than commerce, and he would also try to convince Jews to study Hebrew. My brother-in-law Moshe Menashe did in fact start to learn Hebrew. I refused to learn Hebrew in principle because I did not intend to go to Israel. He gave me Hebrew books about the lives of the founders of Israel, such as Theodore HerzI and David Ben-Gurion and other books about the birth of Israel.

Yosef Khabaza printed a large number of pamphlets and handed them out to all the Jews he would run into, whether or not they had given up their citizenship. These pamphlets celebrated Israel's Independence Day. He would do the same thing on every Jewish holiday, with every pamphlet explaining the current holiday.

He also used to hand out these pamphlets during parties he organized. Israeli flags were flown and Hebrew songs were sung. I was once in Yehezkel Austin's house for a holiday party when I saw Yosef Khabaza pull a white flag with parallel blue lines and the Star of David in the middle. He said that it was the Israeli flag. After hanging it on the wall, he told those who were present, big and small, to stand up and to honor the flag. Yehezkel Austin and his family as well as most of his guests left Iraq.

Among the people who assisted Yosef Khabaza in these activities were Ephraim and Yehezkel Sassoon (Yehezkel-the-Red), Adour Maskil, Yehezkel Austin, Naiem Moshe, and Salim Ezra who was a man from Basra who worked for the government. He has a dark complexion with black hair, a muscular build and a large round face. There were many others whose names I don't know. I remember he was also in contact with young women. One of them was Carmelit who lived in El-Sinak near Shaker Abu Khater as well as Dizi the teacher of the Jewish community.

I remember one day I was riding in the car with Yosef and he had brought two young women who spoke English. When we went back to Baghdad, he dropped them off near the Iranian embassy. I understood from what they said that they were former employees of the government and that they had been fired because of the law on the citizenship for Jews.

He would go with a young woman named Aziza to horse races and other public places. (When we showed him the flag that we had found at the Hakharn Haskel Synagogue and the other flag, which was inscribed, in red letters, the accused said it was the same flag as the one Yosef brought to Yehezkel Austin's apartment.)

One day, Yosef Khabaza told me there were hidden weapons in several houses that he wanted to collect and store in synagogues because most of the houses were sold by their owners or planked shut.

Question: When did this happen?

Answer: The cache you discovered in my bedroom, which is in a rented house in the El-Hawidi, was set up by Yosef with the help of a man Yosef trusts very much. I was not present when they set it up. When I returned home, my sister told me what Yosef Khabaza had done. When I asked him about it, he said every member was obligated to have in his house such a cache for the equipment of the Movement and its other belongings. Yosef Khabaza started to store in it books and magazines and pamphlets. He told me it was against local law to possess them.

As for me leaving my house and going to my uncle Sassoon Sadik's house in El-Alawiya district where you found me on the night between June

5th and June 6th, my answer is simple. After I met Yosef Khabaza at about 8:30 PM that night on the street leading from the police academy to El- Karda El-Charguia, he got into my car. I found him very worried, and he told me that Latif Ephraim had been arrested. In the past, Yosef Khabaza had sent me along with Naiem Moshe to make arrangements with Latif. We made contact with Makki Abd El-Razzak, an employee at the Foreign Ministry who had been arrested.

Khabaza worried that Latif Ephraim would give our names to the police, that is, my name, Yosef Khabaza's and Naiem Moshe's. So when I heard this from him, I went to Sassoon Sadik's house to sleep and I stayed there until you found me. When we arrived there, Yosef Khabaza took my car and went back to my house in El-Hawidi to retrieve some books and papers from a cache in my bedroom. I also asked him to bring me some personal belongings, such as clothes and three packs of jewelry that belonged to my three sisters who have given up their citizenship. Yosef went to my house and brought back my leather bag with all these items. That night he also gave me a gun. I put it along with the jewelry in a closet belonging to Sassoon Sadik's wife and I asked Yosef to take my car (license plate #7742) to the Miami Taxi Company so they would send it for repairs at the Scheherazade Garage to fix a number of problems.

Question: On the night of June 5-6th, there was another person with Yosef Khabaza. Did you know that person, and what is the connection between him and Yosef?

Answer: That night, there was with Yosef a young man named Shalom Matbakh (Shalom Salih Shalom). Yosef had sent him to bring the bag and its contents from my house. When he came back with the bag, Yosef took it from him and put it where you found it. He gave me my personal objects and the jewelry. He also gave me a gun. Yosef took the other items that were in the bag. When he noticed that some jars of iodine and Ditol were missing, he sent Shalom back to my house to get them. After Shalom returned with these items, Yosef kept the iodine and gave me the Ditol. Yosef also kept a number of Jews busy bringing some papers to him, that night. When I asked him what the papers were about, he refused to say anything.

Question: The investigators found in your house some paper stained with iodine. If that was Yosef s, why didn't he take it with him along with other papers?

Answer: That absorbent paper is indeed Yosefs. When he told Shalom to bring the Ditol and the iodine, he forgot to tell him to bring along the paper that was on top of the two jars. When I asked Yosef about Shalom, he told me his name was Shalom Matbakh and he trusted him very much. It was with his knowledge that the job of concealing the weapons in their last location was completed.

Question: Did you not ask Yosef how he ended up trusting Shalom on this matter?

Answer: I did ask Yosef Khabaza if the cache in my house was fully closed by Shalom. He told me that Shalom was an expert in building such caches and that it was he who built them and was responsible for them.

Question: Did you often lend your car to Yosef Khabaza or other people so they could use it at night?

Answer: Very rarely. Yosef Khabaza would use my car for no more than two hours. He was supposed to return it at midnight at the latest. I

remember I left my car twice with Yosef overnight because he told me he had to leave early in the morning with a young woman to [go to] El-Alawiyah to ride horses.

Question: On the night of the bombing of the Beit Lawee Company, your car was found parked on El-Rashid Street, not far from the company and next to the El-Amana bus station. Your car was also found on the morning of June 6th near the Stanley Shashua Company after the bombing. Why was your car parked in those places?

Answer: In the night in question, I did not leave my car parked in the place You mentioned. I would tell you if I remembered. As for the morning of June 6th, I went to eat breakfast at the Tiger Palace Hotel between 8:30 and 9:00 AM. I parked my car on El-Rashid Street, across from the Sadik paint shop, near the bus station, and I went to the hotel. As I was paying my breakfast bill, one of the waiters told me there Was a bombing at the Beit Lawee Company the previous night. I told the waiter I had parked my car near the bombing site, and that I'd better remove it from there before the police found it and started asking me questions. I then went to my office.

Question: How often did you eat breakfast in that hotel?

Answer: I ate breakfast in that hotel about ten times since my family left in late March.

Question: You admit that you had ties with Yosef Khabaza. It has been proven in the investigation that he is responsible for all the bombings that took place in Baghdad. He is also the man who concealed the weapons in the David Ezra Synagogue, in the Masouda Shem-Tov Synagogue, in the Hakharn Haskel Synagogue, in the houses at the Faraj-Allah and Abou Dow-Dow neighborhoods. Your previous statements confirm that you collaborated with him in every operation he carried out. What do you have to say about this?

Answer: During the last days of my friendship with Yosef Khabaza, I reprimanded him and I told him not to contact me any more. He would constantly pressure me to participate in the operations of the Movement. But I did not want to join or study Hebrew. I therefore have nothing to do with the actions of that man.

Question: As a jurist knowledgeable of the laws of this land, and aware that Zionist propaganda is against the law, how come you did not keep your distance from Yosef Khabaza once you knew about his actions in this regard? As soon as it happened, why did you not report him to the authorities?

Answer: I knew that his actions were against Iraqi law, but my religious affinity with that man kept me from reporting him. In addition, reporting him would have incriminated me as he had taught me the principles of Zionism and Hebrew.

Question: The report of the chemical expert #3120 of August 11, 1951, which concerns you says that in your leather bag there were traces of a material that has been identified as Lantrik. This material can be one of the ingredients of the explosive Jelknite. What do you have to say about this?

Answer: I have already explained to you my relations with Yosef Khabaza and his frequent visits to my house. I remember one day he

brought a newspaper in which was wrapped a black object and a book. He placed the object in my room and cautioned me not to go near that object or touch it because it was an explosive. He told me "don't play with it!" He explained to me that he would come and pick it up the next day. Then Latif Ephraim was arrested.

On Tuesday June 5th, I ran into Yosef Khabaza on a street in El-Batawin between 7:30 and 8:00 PM, and he told me that he wanted to pick up that object. We rode together in my car, which I drove to Sassoon Sadik's house. That is where you found me and arrested me. Anyway, when we got there, I got off and Yosef Khabaza took the keys to my apartment and my car. Before he left, I asked him to bring me some personal items and my sisters' jewelry.

About an hour later, he came back with my red leather bag at which I am now pointing. He opened it in my presence and took out my clothes, the jewelry and other items. He left the bag and went out. I asked him to drop my car at the Miami Taxi Company for repairs. That is apparently how the material that you mentioned left traces of what was detected.

Question: It was found that you left a gun, the one that you are presently shown, in Sadik Sassoon's house. We retrieved it from this man's wife. What do you have to say about this?

Answer: (after examining the gun): This is not my gun. It belongs to Yosef Khabaza. He brought it to me in the bag on the same night. He gave it to me along with the ammunition.

Question: On the night Yosef Khabaza came, was Shalom Salih with him?

Answer: Yes, Shalom Salih was with Yosef Khabaza, but he did not go into Sassoon Sadik's house. He waited for him outside.

Question: What information do you have to extend concerning Yosef Khabaza's trust towards Shalom Salih?

Answer: Yosef Khabaza did trust Shalom Salih very, very much. To demonstrate this, he told me that same night that Shalom Salih helped him conceal the weapons in caches, and that it was Shalom Salih who had dug up the caches and who had set them up. It was for this very reason that he came with him that night.

Question: It is known that Shalom Salih is a man Khabaza trusts and shares his secrets with. If Shalom Salih tells me something about Khabaza, could it possibly be untrue?

Answer: *I* don't think he would say anything but the truth about Yosef Khabaza, in view of their ties and about what Yosef Khabaza told me about Shalom Salih.

Question: Considering Shalom Salih's character and his ties to Yosef Khabaza as well as what Shalom Salih told us about the weapons caches and Yosef Khabaza's actions in the bombings, Shalom Salih admitted that he personally took part in these operations with Yosef Khabaza. He also testified about your collaboration with them. Considering that what you said about Shalom Salih's credibility is true, then what he told us about your participation must also be true. (At this point I read Shalom Salih's confession to the accused.) What do you have to say about this?

Answer: What Shalom said about me is nothing but lies! In the last instance, I was at my Uncle Sadik Sassoon's home from the early evening hours and I stayed there.

About the next to last incident that took place near the Beit Lawee Company, I was in my house all night. The next morning, I woke up early, and at 8:00 AM, I went to the Tiger Palace Hotel to eat breakfast. It was the waiter Yosef who told me about the bombing.

As for the bombing at the American Cultural Center, that day I was in my office from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM. Around 12:30 PM El-Hadj Kassem came over and told me about the bombing.

No doubt this bombing had a purpose, generally to encourage the Jews to renounce their Iraqi citizenship and go to Israel. Since I do not subscribe to Yosef Khabaza's principles and what he was spreading among Jews, and since I have not renounced my Iraqi citizenship, I had no motivation to commit such acts, and this is my testimony.

— Excerpts of the testimony, August 14, 1951.

EIGHT

From the Transcripts of the Bombing Case

There is a great deal of material in this file. It contains the confessions of Yosef Basri and Shalom Salih Shalom, the photographs of the weapons caches and the weapons found in them. There are photographs of the leaders of the Jewish community in Baghdad and the Chief Rabbi standing with the investigators next to the piles of weapons that were found in each cache. There are also the reports of the team of investigators about action taken by the team in regard to certain suspects in the espionage case. These can also be found in the file dealing with the bombings due to the overlapping nature and the connections of the suspects in the two cases. Here is an example:

On the night of June 5-6, 1951 (the night of the bombing near the Stanley Shashua Company), the man known as Yosef Khabaza got in touch with Salim Mouallem and asked him to have a meeting on an urgent matter. He called at midnight using the phone of the Miami Taxi Company. Mouallem agreed to the meeting, and a cab of the Miami Taxi Company arrived to pick him up at his house. In the taxi was a young man named Shalom Matbakh (Shalom Salih Shalom was known by that name because he worked at the kitchen of the Masouda Shem-Tov Synagogue). This cab was later rejoined and followed by a second cab, which carried Yosef Murad Abdullah Khabaza and the driver Abraham Ezra, of the Miami Taxi Company.

Khabaza talked with Salim Mouallem about disappearing or getting out of the country, since many had already been arrested. Their conversation went on, as they were riding until about one hour after midnight. Salim was dropped off at his house after agreeing to Khabaza's demands. But he claimed that the bank keys and some important documents were still in his house and that he needed to retrieve them before fleeing. That is when we arrested him. We found out that Shalom Matbakh worked at the Masouda Shem-Tov synagogue (where Jews waited before leaving Iraq). He tried to escape but we captured him. He confessed and signed the enclosed confession.

We then went to the Miami Taxi Company to interrogate the driver Abraham Ezra. He took us to the places where he had driven his passengers the preceding night. He took us to the houses where Khabaza

would go. The attorney Yosef Basri lived in one of them, but he was not home. The driver took us to another house in the neighborhood of Al-Karda El-Sharguia that belonged to Sassoon Sadik, and where he took Shalom Salih Shalom and Yosef Khabaza on the night of June 5-6, 1951. When we arrived at that location with the investigating judge, we found Yosef Basri. He was hiding and was terrified. We arrested him and searched the house. We found a cache similar to the other ones that contained weapons, but this cache was empty. We did find a suitcase and a red leather bag. During our investigation we found out that Shalom Salih Shalom and Yosef Khabaza had left in a cab and that Khabaza tossed a black object from the window of the taxi.

When the chemical laboratory experts examined the bag, they found it contained traces of Jelknite. We questioned Mrs. Simkha Daoud Babaye (the wife of Yosef Basri's landlord). She told us that Yosef Basri had disappeared on the night of June 5th, and the man who constantly visited him was Yosef Khabaza, also known as "Johnny" or "Nissim Moshe" (he registered under this name as a driver at the Miami Taxi Company). Yosef Basri confessed that the cache had been used by Yosef Khabaza to hide various objects, which he would bring to the house. We found the cache with the aid of Shalom Salih Shalom, as we did the other caches.

Court Transcripts (Continued)

Defense Attorney: Why are there several confessions given on different dates for each suspect?

Prosecutor: If my esteemed colleague would look at the file, he would see that each confession pertains to a different matter.

Derense Attorney. Where were the suspects on those days (when the confessions took place)?

Presiding judge: *You* should direct this question to your client. (Tuming to the suspects): Where were you detained?

Suspect #1 (Shalom Salih Shalom): At El-Karach. (It is the bank of the Tigris River opposite to downtown Baghdad.)

Suspect #2 (Yosef Basri): At El-Waziriya police station.

Presiding judge (to the defense attorney): if you wish, you may file a complaint about their detention or against those who detained them. The session is now over. The deliberations will resume on October 21,1951.

Second Session

October 25, 1951

Those present included the judge, the accused, the witnesses, media representatives, members of the foreign diplomatic corps, and leaders of the Jewish community in Iraq. On one side of the courtroom were displayed boxes full of weapons and ammunition, and barrels that had been buried underground to serve as caches, and more. The prosecutor called the chief of police, Salim El-Kureishi, to the witness stand.

Salim El-Kureishi: After the attack at the American Cultural Center on March 19, 1951, the team of investigators began to act forcefully in order to find the perpetrators. The investigation revealed that the perpetrators used hand grenades #36 which are available in Iraq only to security forces in the three following attacks:

1. The Café Dar El-Beyda
2. The Masouda Shem-Tov Synagogue
3. The American Cultural Center

In the other attacks, the perpetrators used explosives of the Jelknite type. Some traces of this matter have been detected in the red leather bag that belongs to the suspect Yosef Ibrahim Basri.

Presiding judge: How did you find out the names of the suspects?

Salim El-Kureishi: In the room of the man who calls himself Salhoon (Yehuda Taggar), we found a list of phony names such as: *The Reporter, The Economist, The Educated, Habib, Zayd, Juni, Eyal and Maki-Smith.*

In the course of the investigation, we discovered that "The Reporter" was Salim Mouallem, the manager of the Al-Rafidayn Bank. When we interrogated him, he told us the name of the suspect Shalom Salih Shalom. During the course of the investigation, he started to show us the places where the weapons had been hidden.

With the help of a military expert and the investigating judge of North El-Ratsafa, we were able to locate the caches of weapons and ammunition. We also found lists of members of the (Zionist) Movement and of Ha'shura. During the course of the investigation, the accused Shalom Salih Shalom began to tell us about the activities of the suspect Yosef Khabaza. Khabaza had confessed to him that he had carried out all the operations, and that he was under the orders of a man named Habib (Mordechai Ben-Porat).

As for the suspect Yosef Ibrahim, he claimed he was hiding for three days in the house where he was arrested. That house belongs to Sassoon Murad Sadik and is located in the neighborhood of El-Alawiya. He was in a very agitated state, like someone who had committed a crime, and he yelled to us: "Come and arrest me!"

Presidingludge: This is for the court to establish.

Salim El-Kureishi: I apologize, your Honor.

Presiding judge: Proceed.

Salim El-Kureishi: During the search of the suspect's home, we found a notebook with some pages torn out, and a military map in English of the District of Baghdad, and a red leather bag. The bag was sent to the forensic laboratory to be checked, and the expert chemist reported to us that he found in it traces of material pointing to Jelknite. The suspect Shalom Salih Shalom identified the bag as his, and added that Yosef Khabaza had brought it from his house. It should be noted that Yosef Basri told us about the existence of a weapons and ammunition stockpile at the Masouda Shem-Tov Synagogue, even before we found the stockpile ourselves.

Attorney Dhiban El-Ghaban: Did the investigators take people from the airport to question them, and did they release them?

Salim El-Kureishi: This question is related to members of the armed Ha'shura organization. We did indeed find some names, and the investigators tried to locate people with similar names at the airport. Once they were questioned and turned out to be innocent, we released them. We saw to it that they were carried to the airport and that they did not miss their flight.

Attorney Dhihan El-Ghaban: Was an investigating judge present when the police questioned these people?

Presiding judge. You cannot ask this question. It pertains to the investigating judge and the Supreme Court.

The prosecutor called Mrs. Simkha Daoud Babaye to the witness stand.

Presidingfudge: Who is Johnny?

Mrs. Simkha Daoud Babaye. *I* don't know, except that Yosef Basri, my husband's nephew would often host a man named "Johnny," and it was my understanding that Johnny is Yosef Khabaza. (About the gun, the witness said that Yosef Basri gave it to her along with the jewelry, and she in turn gave it to the police investigators.)

Witness Eliahu Georgi Abid

Eliahu is twenty-two years old and lives in the house where Yosef Khabaza rented a room. When the Presiding judge interrogated him in court, he appeared very nervous and requested a defense attorney.

Presiding judge: You are only a witness. You do not need a defense lawyer ... Did the suspect live in your house?

Eliahu Georgi Abid. Yes, for about two months ... Then his mother and brother came to live with him.

Presiding judge: Do you know the accused Yosef Basri?

Eliahu Georgi Abid: No, but when Yosef Khabaza came to live in our house, Basri used to visit him.

Presiding judge: As landlord, did you know about the barrels and the weapons which Khabaza brought in and in which he concealed weapons in his room after burying them under the floor?

Eliahu Georgi Abid: No, I had no idea about this.

Presiding fudge: These are large barrels, not cans of sardines. Such action by Khabaza is not something trivial.

Eliahu Georgi Abid: I have no information about what happened in our house.

Presiding ludge. Your testimony to the investigating judge from Northern El-Ratsafa conflicts with what you are telling us here. So how come you signed your testimony?

Eliahu Georgi Abid: They tortured me, your Honor. Then they ordered me to sign the confession. So I did.

Presiding judge: Did you tell the investigating judge that you were tortured?

Eliahu Georgi Abid: I told him that I had been beaten up and that my eyeglasses had been broken, but I was beaten in front of him.

The witness got off the stand, and the next witness Abd El-Wahhab Mohammed Kaddouri was called to testify.

Abd El-Wahhah Mohammed Kaddouri: I am an engineer with the Railway Authority. On March 19th, I was at the American Cultural Center. I was looking at the ceiling when the explosion occurred. I fainted because I was wounded in several places."

Third Session October 27, 1951

Media representatives, foreign diplomats (including Wilbur Crane Eveland of the CIA and author of *Ropes of Sand: America's Failure in the Middle East,* New York: W. W. Norton, 1980) and leaders of the Iraqi Jewish community were present at every court session. The accused and their defense attorney, Dhiban El-Gaban would sit on their bench.

Every day, immediately before 10 AM, the court bailiff would shout *"MAHKAMA !"* (the court). All would rise and the judges would enter the courtroom. On October 27, 1951, attorney Dhiban El-Gaban requested permission to make a statement. The judges consulted among themselves.

Presiding judge: Speak forth, if you please.

> ***Attorney Dhihan El-Gahan:*** The principle of legal assistance, including the defense of a suspect is a fundamental right in our judicial system. This is why I assumed the defense of the suspects. When I did so, I was not affiliated with a political organization. I recently joined such an organization and this fact became public. The media exploited the issue at the same time I was trying to defend the suspects. This has hurt me a great deal, and will yet hurt the organization that I have joined. Therefore, in light of all of the above, I ask the court to relieve me of my responsibilities and give them to another attorney.

The Presiding judge announced a recess. All the judges went into chambers to consult each other. They later came out, and the Presiding Judge announced that the resignation of attorney Dhiban El-Gaban had been accepted and that the trial would be postponed to a further date so the accused could be given another defense attorney. In my inquiry, I learned that a new attorney, Abd El-Amir Abu Turab, was appointed. He defended the accused from the fourth session. But I did not find any detailed information concerning the fourth session.

I only found some information about the fifth session, which took place on November 5, 1951. The file was bound and the photographs were not particularly helpful. There was the sentence signed by the judges, with their names and positions, and the date. The only copy of the book written on the subject that I could find was in very bad shape. It was difficult to extract much from it, except for the conclusion of the trials.

Excerpts from the Last Session, November 5, 1951

The same people were present. The Presiding Judge asked the prosecutor to make his closing argument. The prosecutor read his summation, which took a whole hour. He concluded by saying:

> Even if it were true that the suspects were mistreated during their questioning, their testimony in this esteemed court was in no way different from what they told the investigating judge, and each of them confirmed with this signature. Suffice it to say that what they told us here will convict them to the fullest extent of the law.
>
> As for the charges of law violations that my esteemed colleague (defense attorney Abd El-Amir Abu Turab) brought up, I do not see any connection between that and the criminal law.

Concluding his summation, the prosecutor called for the death sentence for the suspects in view of the seriousness of their actions:

> The two suspects Yosef Basri and Shalom Salih Shalom are not at fault in the establishment of the State of Israel. We all know full well who established it.

The judges recessed to consult each other. About an hour later, they came back and the Presiding Judge read the verdict. After reading for half an hour, he read the sentence. The court sentenced each of the accused to three death sentences. The verdict was passed to the King for signature.

The court also decided to impound Yosef Basri's car with license plates #7742-Baghdad, and to sell it in auction. The proceeds of the sale were to be transferred to the State Treasury. The court would keep the jewelry until the rightful owners came to claim it. The weapons and ammunition were to be transferred to the depots of the security forces.

The Evidence

As noted above, Wilbur Crane Eveland watched the court proceedings and described them in his book, *Ropes of Sand*. But he gave no details about the evidence that linked the Zionist activists to the attacks. However I am in position to do so.

In 1955, I organized a statewide panel of attorneys of Iraqi origin in Israel. The purpose was to find avenues to handle the claims of Iraqi Jews who had left property behind when they emigrated from Iraq. One of these attorneys, a well-known jurist who wishes not to be identified, made a presentation on the chance of achieving this purpose.

His lecture lasted about an hour and was followed by discussion on the immigration of Iraqi Jews and the forces that led to their departure from Iraq. After his lecture, I asked him about the trials of Baghdad and the

evidence that was produced. The man knew about my past activities in the Zionist movement and told me:

> Naeim my friend, you were very active smuggling Jews of Iraq across the border to Iran. I am sure that you know what was going on in Baghdad. Why then are you playing the naïve?

I explained to the man that I was in Israel when the events took place. I was far away from Iraq and what was happening there. He thought briefly, and then he said in a low voice:

> I will tell you what I know about this matter, but first you must promise to me that, under no circumstances, will you reveal my name. (I promised.) Iraqi Jews know I was a very successful attorney in Baghdad. But my success was not due to my expertise in the intricacies of the law and justice. It was due to the depth of my good and strong ties with the prosecutors, and in particular with the investigators of the Special Department (C.I.D.).
>
> I had very good ties with them because of the bribes I paid them. It was also my policy in Iraq to get in touch with the head of the C.I.D. and to look at the charges (for a fee, of course) before I would agree to defend anyone. If I saw that the evidence was incontrovertible and that my chances of success were slim, I would ask my client for an impossibly large fee so the family of the accused would leave my office and never come back. After the arrest of the Israeli agents Robert Henry Rodney and Yehuda Taggar, scores of young Jews were arrested, when their phone numbers were found in the pockets of Yehuda Taggar.
>
> The parents of one of them asked me to assume the defense of their progeny. The next day, I went to the C.I.D., which is located on the bank of the Tigris. My contact offered me a cup of tea and asked me my client's name. He then handed me the whole file. It was very fat and included 114 cases, one of which reviewed the charges against my client. It took me two hours to examine the file. The truth is, there was no evidence against my client except that the other men gave his name during their interrogations. As I was reading, I came across a fact that shocked me. As I recall, there was the following:
>
> 1. The accused Shalom Salih Shalom's confession on the bombings at different sites.
> 2. Photographs of Shalom Salih Shalom pointing at the weapons stockpiles, one after the other. The police had discovered eleven such stockpiles that contained automatic weapons, submachine guns, guns and pistols, assault grenades, hand grenades, incendiary devices, dynamite, detonators, cables, and much more.
> 3. A leather bag found with Yosef Basri, and containing traces of explosive materials that were detected by a British chemist who worked at the criminal investigation laboratory.
> 4. Yosef Basri's driver's license that was found in one of the secret stockpiles.
> 5. A list of members of the Zionist movement given by Shalom Salih Shalom. They were his superiors who gave him the order to carry out the attacks.
> 6. Maps and drawings of military nature. But most important of all was the report from the criminal investigation laboratory. It examined carefully the print on the anti-American leaflets found

next to the American Cultural Center after a bomb destroyed it. It turned out to be identical to the print on the leaflet that was distributed by the Zionist movement immediately after the bombing of the Café Dar El-Beyda, on Abu Nuwwas Street, on the evening of March 19, 1951. Four Jews who were celebrating Passover were injured. The two leaflets had been typed with the same typewriter and duplicated with the same stenciling machine. The interchangeability was striking. I was flabbergasted.

I even began to sweat profusely. Maybe it was because of the August heat, I am not sure. Someone brought me a glass of cold water to help me recover. I went home completely depressed. Even though the evidence against my client was light, I refused to take on his case because up to this point I never could have thought that Jews would kill Jews for political gains.

A Strange Conduct

The conduct of the Zionist activists in Iraq seemed very strange to me, as did that of Israeli leaders in the face of unfolding events. It is worth examining the conduct of Mordechai Ben-Porat and the rest of the Israeli agents in Iraq. The leaflet they issued bore the date (April 8, 1950), the day of the week (Saturday), and the time (4 PM).

1. The Zionist movement in Iraq did not issue leaflets on an hourly basis. They issued them once a month, in average. Why did the leaders of the Zionist movement state the time of 4 PM on their leaflet, unless there was an expectation that an event was to happen later ?
2. Promptly after tossing the bomb on the Café Dar El-Beyda (April 8, 1950), the police began to act forcefully. If those who carried out the bombing did not belong to the Zionist movement, then why were the Movement leaders in such a hurry to put pressure and get the magistrate removed and eventually close the case?
3. Israeli authors, such as Yehuda Atlas (*To the Hanging Post, 'Ad amud ha-teliyah,* Yerushalayim, 1972), Me'ir Yossef *(A Road in the Desert, Me-ever la-midbar,* Tel Aviv: Ma'arakhot, 1973) and Hayyim Cohen *(Zionist Activities en Iraq, ha-Pe'ilut ha-Tsiyonit be-'Irak,* Jerusalem, 1969) keep repeating the words: "It is not possible to elaborate on the subject without revealing certain things that are better kept silent." These words have been written after all those who were involved were in the safety of Israel or were deceased. What with the mysterious attitude?
4. What are those things that are better kept silent?
5. The Israeli weekly *Ha'olarn Haze* has explicitly accused Mordechai Ben-Porat for being responsible for throwing the bombs at the Jewish institutions of Baghdad. Why is Ben-Porat not suing the editors, if he is innocent ? Why is he afraid to sue *Ha'olam Haze ?* After all, what was written so far suffices as grounds for a lawsuit.
6. Why does the Israeli government not respond to the demands of concerned citizens who want to see a judicial commission inquire on the subject ? After all, this issue was often discussed in the press, and at times at the Knesset. A government that has nothing to fear and nothing to hide must support those who favor an investigation. Yet the Israeli government has always tried to evade any debate on this subject, as has Mordechai Ben-Porat.

NINE

From the Court

From the time of the assassination of General Baker Sidki in 1937 until the abolition of the monarchy in 1958, all the successive governments made sure that no political group opposed to Great Britain in the Middle East could organize, especially armed groups. Every anti-British organization was deemed anti-Iraqi government as well. For this reason the Iraqi government was meticulous in safeguarding the weapons used by the army, gendarmerie or the police.

Since the fall of the revolutionary government of Rashid Ali Al-Kilani in April 1941 until the July 1958 coup, there is no record of armed political organizations, thanks to a drastic safeguard of the weapons delivered to the army and the police. In addition, the government had about 80,000 detectives and other security personnel. The government was well aware of the existence of the underground Zionist movement, but as long as it kept a low profile, the government ignored it, knowing the Zionists did not intend to overthrow the pro-British government.

A Change of Position

Immediately after the attack on the Café Dar El-Beyda (April 8, 1950), the police were ordered to act and a number of suspects were arrested. All were later identified as Ha'shura members. Soon after their arrests, they were released on bail and the Movement smuggled them immediately into Iran from where they were flown to Israel. Yet, this is nothing compared to the leaflets found at the site of the bombing, which called upon the Jews to leave Iraq. At first, the police tried to ignore the leaflets and their content, and focused its investigation on organizations known for their hostility to Jews or Zionism.

The investigation took a new turn after a grenade was tossed on the Masouda Shem-Tov Synagogue on January 14, 1951 at 7:30 PM. This attack resulted in four deaths and dozens of injuries. While the police did not cease investigating groups known for their hostility towards Jews, it began to keep an eye on all Zionist activists who handled the registration of immigrants to Israel. They even watched the members of the committee who had been appointed by the Minister of the Interior (Charles, Irdi Sofer, etc.).

The investigation on radical groups led nowhere. Then an explosive charge blew up at the American Cultural Center in Baghdad. After the explosion, antiAmerican leaflets were found around the site. The criminal investigation laboratory examined them and compared them to the

leaflets issued by the Zionist movement. It was clear that the same typewriter and stenciling machine were used to produce them. The clandestine communist party was cleared of suspicion because its leaflets were never stenciled. From this moment forward, the investigation focused on immigration activists or those who were associated with them. A number of informants were planted among the Interior Ministry employees who were assisting with the registration of Jews to leave Iraq.

The Turnaround

At 3:00 AM on the morning of May 10, 1951, an explosive charge blew up near the offices of the Beit Lawee Company. The investigators who came to the scene were not surprised by what they found. Traces of explosives that were found indicated they did not come from the Iraqi armed forces storehouses. The investigators debated the information that was accumulated, and reached the preliminary conclusion that the authors of the different acts of sabotage picked up sites frequented mostly by Jews, but committed their acts when there were few or no Jews present.

Hence the conclusion that their purpose was not to harm Iraqi Jews but to spread fear and panic among them, to incite them to emigrate. Moreover, the attacks occurred at a time when the flow of people registering to emigrate was low. This fact also gave pause to the investigators and reinforced their suspicions concerning the underground Zionist movement. These conclusions marked the turnaround in the investigation.

On May 22, 1951, a Palestinian clerk in the department store Orosdi-Back recognized a customer who was an Israeli army officer and the former military governor of Acco. The man was arrested along with his driver Nissim Moshe Nissim. These arrests eventually led the police to the capture of the network.

According to the findings of the investigators, the suspects were divided in three main groups:

1. Those who were suspected of carrying out the acts of sabotage.
2. Those who were suspected of espionage.
3. Those who were suspected of belonging to illegal organizations (Ha'shura, etc ...).

This decision was made in spite of the fact that all the suspects in each group were found to be members or commandants in the Zionist movement.

Testimony of the Head of the C.I.D. In Baghdad

During the investigation, it was learned that the perpetrators of the acts of sabotage were not Jew-haters as it was initially thought, but rather people who wanted to serve the political goals of Zionism, namely pushing the Jews of Iraq to immigrate to Israel. When the American embassy personnel received the instruction from Washington to look into what was described as "persecution of Jews in Iraq by the Iraqi government and its institutions," a bomb was tossed on the American Cultural Center of Baghdad.

This act was most likely meant to deter embassy officials from looking closely into this matter. According to the testimony and the evidence, it turned out that the perpetrators of all the attacks with the exception of the

bombing of the American Cultural Center, were the same individuals. Their goal was to scare the Jews of Iraq to immigrate to Israel.

Testimony of Salim EL-Kureishl, Chief of Police at Kardat Maryam In Baghdad

The investigation revealed:

1. All attacks were carried out at places frequented by Jews.
2. The perpetrators made sure the attacks occurred at times when there were few Jews present on the scene, and caused no bodily harm.
3. The explosives used by the perpetrators were of a type that was not available in Iraq, not even to the armed forces.
4. After each bombing, leaflets were handed to Jews, urging them to go to Israel. The leaflets also claimed that the Jews of Iraq were the victims of persecution by the Iraqi government and the Moslem population.
5. Only Jews were the targets of these acts.
6. The acts began immediately after the law of denaturalization of the Jews of Iraq was enacted.

The witness believes that a single party carried out all these acts, after preparation and planning. Therefore, it was decided to focus the investigation on groups that were hostile to Jews and Zionism, but this lead went nowhere. The turnaround occurred after the bomb, which exploded at 3:00 AM on May 10, 1951 (Beit Lawee Company). This event gave rise to the decision to investigate in a different direction. We did so and we captured the entire network.

The Dossier of Those Accused of Sabotage

The investigation took more than three-and-a-half months. On October 24, 1951, the debate began on the sabotage affair. The Supreme Court *(El-Mahkama El-Kobra)* was presided by Chief justice Hammadi Sadr El-Din who was assisted by Justices Borhan El-Din El-Kiliani and Salman Biyat. Attorney Shaker El-Ani represented the prosecution. The accused were:

1. Shalom Salih Shalom, age 20, employed by the Jewish community institutions, and resident in El-Batawin, in Baghdad.
2. Yosef Ibrahim Basri, age 28, attorney, and resident in El-Karda El-Sharguia, in Baghdad.
3. Yosef Murad Khabaza (fugitive in Israel).

The Charges

The prosecutor read the charges and the confessions of the first two suspects:

> The defendants are accused of organizing for the purpose of carrying out acts of sabotage for political ends, causing manslaughter, bodily harm and property damage. In the course of the investigation, the police arrested Salim Mouallem, the manager of the Baghdad branch of Bank El-Rafidayn. He confessed and gave the name of Shalom Salih Shalom who was arrested at the

Masouda Shem-Tov Synagogue. As the investigation progressed, the suspects turned out to be members of the underground Zionist organization, Ha'shura, which stockpiled weapons and ammunition, including explosive charges, hand grenades, detonators, pistols and even daggers.

Weapons and ammunition were found in two stockpiles buried under the chapel at the Ezra David Synagogue, and in five stockpiles at the Hakham Haskel Synagogue. Propaganda books and leaflets were found in caches at the Masouda Shem-Tov Synagogue.

The investigation led to charges against the abov three suspects, namely Shalom Salih Shalom, Yosef Basri and Yosef Murad Khabaza.

The Attacks

1. On March 19, 1951, at 10:30 AM, a bomb exploded at the American Cultural Center of Baghdad, causing property damage and injuring a number of people.
2. On May 10, 1951, at 3:00 AM, a bomb was hurled at the window of the Beit Lawee Company and destroyed a part of the building.
3. On June 6, 1951, at 2:30 AM, a bomb exploded next to the Stanley Shashua Company on El- Rasheed Street and damaged the building.

The attacks were carried out for political reasons. They were not intended to kill Jews. According to his own confession, the accused Shalom Salih Shalom would go to the site of the attack with his friends Yosef Khabaza and Yosef Basri. Then he would toss the grenades as the two other men waited in the car. The accused also led the investigators to the place where he hid before the attack at the American Cultural Center.

The court asked the suspects if they wanted to plead guilty, but their attorneys denied the charges and claimed the confessions had been extracted under pressure by the investigators. During five sessions, the investigating team presented the findings and the evidence, such as:

1. The report of the criminal investigation laboratory. It compared the type of explosives used on the night of May 9th to May 10th, 1951, near the Beit Lawee Company with the traces of explosives detected in Yosef Basri's bag. The report stated they were identical.
2. Yosef Basri's driver's license. It was found in one of the caches of weapons and ammunition.
3. The suspects confessed to being members of the Ha'shura organization. According to their testimony, it is the military branch of the Zionist movement in Iraq.
4. The interchangeability of the leaflets found at all sites where the attacks occurred on the one hand and the leaflets signed by the Zionist movement on the other hand. The typewriter used to type the leaflets and the stenciling machines used to duplicate them were found in one of the depots.
5. The confession of Shalom Salih Shalom. He revealed that he carried out the attacks with the help of Yosef Basri and Yosef Khabaza.

On November 5, 1951, the court sentenced the three men to hang. It also noted during the sentencing that the investigation was significantly helped by the explosion near the Beit Lawee Company. It was concluded

that an underground Zionist movement called "T'nuaa" operated in Iraq, and that foreign agents were infiltrated in the country illegally in order to run and supervise the activities of the Movement.

THE ESPIONAGE FILE
From the Chief Prosecutor

In his closing statement, the State Prosecutor said:

After the turnaround in the investigation, we focused our efforts on the Zionist underground organization called "T'nuaa" (the Movement).

On May 22, 1951, Ismael Salhoon (Yehuda Taggar) was arrested at the Orosdi-Back department store, along with the taxi driver, Moshe Nissim who is a native of Baghdad. A Palestinian refugee who worked at the department store identified Salhoon as an officer in the Israeli army who had been the military governor of Acco when the Zionists occupied the city. During the interrogation of Salhoon and during the search of his residence, several lists of names were found, and thanks to them we were able to arrest the suspects. The suspect admitted that his real name was Ben-Meir Menashe Taggar and that he was Israeli, born in Jerusalem, and that he served in the British army. He also admitted that, after the British left Palestine, he joined the Israeli army and was transferred to its intelligence section.

He was first sent to Tehran on a mission related to the immigration of Iraqi Jews. From there he went to Baghdad on February 11, 1950. He came to Iraq to collect information. He would send his reports with a driver who shuttled between Baghdad and Tehran. His reports were addressed to a postal box in Tehran (# 57-902) or to a certain A. Kidron in Rome. That is how the suspect was in touch with Max Beinit, his superior, in Tehran. At some point, Taggar suggested to Beinit to expand the network in Iraq, and Beinit approved the idea.

Taggar returned to Baghdad on April 9, 1951. He was arrested on May 22, 1951. When we searched his pockets we found lists of names of additional suspects, including Robert Henry Rodney.

In Yehuda Taggar's residence we found a cache of weapons, where he also hid the reports he was preparing to send to Israel. He wrote about various subjects, from Iraq's socio-economic situation to the strength of the different political parties, including the Kurdish parties. Yehuda Taggar entered Iraq with a false passport that was delivered to Ismael Ben-Mehdi and Sugra Salhoon. He had rented a room from a white Russian lady in El-Batawin, in Baghdad. The reports were written in English on a typewriter, which we found in the house. At the beginning of the investigation, Taggar claimed he was a Moslem and that he could only speak Farsi. But he was quickly confounded. He also pretended to be the representative of a commercial enterprise named Kashanian that was based in Tehran and that sold its products in Iraq.

On searching his room, we found the names of collaborators such as:

1. Mekki Abd El-Razzak, a low-ranking employee with the Foreign Ministry.
2. Latif Ephraim (L), an Iraqi Jew who is a laboratory assistant at the Baghdad Hospital (now the Republican Hospital). He also holds a foreign citizenship.
3. Mamdooh Zakki (Maskil), an Iraqi Moslem of Turkish descent. He used to work at the Foreign Ministry before he was dismissed

because he was suspected of collaborating with the Zionists. At the time of his arrest, he was a reporter for a French news agency.
4. Zakki Habib, which is the code name of Nissim Moshe Nissim, one of the main agents in the Zionist movement (Mordechai Ben-Porat). He managed to escape after his arrest.
5. Salim Mouallem (the Reporter), an Iraqi Jew who was a bank manager in Baghdad.
6. Robert Henry Rodney, who holds a valid British Passport. He is a native of Germany from where he escaped to go to Holland. He joined the British army and rose to the rank of major. He served in India for a long time. He retired from the British army and went to Israel. He was assigned an intelligence position in Paris with Arthur Nathan and his assistant Adin. They offered him a dangerous mission in Iraq. He first went to Tehran where he spent six months in the local office of the Jewish Agency. Then he arrived in Baghdad, as the representative of two British companies based in Manchester, England: Amson Mills Company, a textile company, and El-Tarn Company, a company that sells radio sets. He first stayed at a hotel, but he later rented a villa in Kard El-Basha where he started to mingle with the high society of Baghdad and meet public figures. Rodney claimed that one of his missions was to spread the idea of an Arab-Israeli peace among the Iraqi intelligentsia in order to create an atmosphere conducive to a peace treaty in the Middle East. He believed that when the right time came, he would become Israel's first consul in Baghdad. Rodney testified that Salhoon was a Jew from Israel whose real name was Yehuda Taggar. Rodney said it was Taggar who financed his activities. A telegram found in Rodney's house and addressed to Max Beinit requested more "ropes." When the suspect was asked to explain, Rodney said "ropes" meant "money." Yehuda Taggar and Robert Henry Rodney were the leaders of an Israeli network of spies, enemies of Iraq.

The Presiding Judge asked the suspects if they wanted to plead their guilt. Yehuda Taggar was the only one who said: "I am guilty."

The court examined the material during seventeen sessions. On display were the espionage reports that were not sent, military maps and much more. The reports were sorted in two stacks, depending on their relation to the military. The military reports included detailed information on the expeditionary force that had left for Syria when this country requested Iraq to send its troops to fight Israel in the demilitarized zone.

In January 1952, the court voted to find the suspects guilty. Yehuda Taggar was sentenced to life imprisonment with hard labor. Robert Henry Rodney, Latif Ephraim and Salim Mouallem were sentenced to 5 years in prison with hard labor. The court also ordered the deportation from Iraq of Robert Henry Rodney and Latif Ephraim after they served their sentence.

Yehuda Taggar was released from jail soon after Abd El-Karim Kassem took over in a coup in July 1958. The following months, the Israeli weekly *Ha'olam Haze* ran a series of reports on the underground movement led by Kassem before the coup. Among other things, it reported that Kassem had asked Israel for help in the early fifties, such as setting up a training camp for guerilla warfare and a radio station on the Jerusalem hills that would broadcast to Iraqis against the monarchy and the likes of Nouri El-Said.

The Israeli government translated these reports into Arabic and English and forwarded them to the British Embassy in Tel Aviv. The British Embassy in turn passed them on to the British Foreign Office that

forwarded them to its embassy in Baghdad, which handed them to Kassem. They came with the threat that if Yehuda Taggar were not released within a specific period, the material would be sent to Radio Cairo, which would be glad to broadcast anything to discredit Kassem. Yehuda Taggar was promptly released and escorted from his jail to the Presidential Palace. Abd El-Karim Kassem met with him and then he was driven to Baghdad's international airport. He flew to Europe, and then went to Israel.

The File on the Illegal Organization

The Iraqi Supreme Court examined this file during twelve sessions, from November 15, 1951, until the sentencing, on January 18, 1951. Twenty-three suspects were on trial, including some young women.

The chief prosecutor argued that the suspects were members of an underground, illegal and subversive organization that was linked to the enemy state of Israel. They were members of the organization Ha'shura, which was the military arm of the Zionist movement. The suspects received the following sentences:

1. Shalom Salih Shalom and Yosef Basri received the death sentence.
2. Eliahu Georgi Abid received 15 years in prison with hard labor.
3. Fuad Itzhak Nathan, Shaul Yehezkel, Abraham Karkouli, Yaakov Sassoon Shaia, Ezra Rahamim and Yaakov Ati received five years in jail with hard labor.
4. Spirons Yaakov Shamash, Albertin Reuven Eliahu and Medalin Reuven Levi received five months in jail.
5. All the women were released for time served.

As for those who received the death penalty, the Movement made sure they received hashish and opium from the day of their sentence until their execution on January 21, 1952.

Excerpts from the Second File

From the transcript, the prosecutor Abd El-Rahman El-Samaray said the following:

> The police arrested Salhoon and another Iraqi Jew who calls himself Nissim Moshe (Mordechai Ben-Porat). Nissim Moshe was released on bail and disappeared. Salhoon rented a room in an American rooming house run by a Russian woman named Barbara, whose telephone number is 4444. Salhoon (Yehuda Taggar) claimed that since he specialized in the study of the Middle East, the Israeli government sent him on a mission in Iraq, and told him to contact the three following men, once he was settled:
>
> 1. Rasheed Ismael Baglan.
> 2. Mohammed El-Amine Fikri.
> 3. Mohammed Ahmed El-Bayati (The Pilot).
>
> The three men were from the Northern city of Khanakin, in the Kurdish region and could help him. Taggar was told to contact them and give them the password: "I am a friend of Naeim Zilcha."

The second file is voluminous but offers no surprises. The suspect list is long, containing a number of Moslems and Christians, and even foreigners residing in Iraq. At the top of the list are Ismael Ben-Mehdi and Sugra Salhoon (Yehuda Ben-Meir Menashe Taggar). Second on the list is Robert Henry Rodney who holds a British citizenship. His code name in the movement is "Yaniv" and he is also called "Al-Hindi."

The other suspects are:

Latif Ephraim. Makki Abd El-Razzak. Salim Mouallem *(The Reporter)*, a bank manager. Mamdouh Zakki. Naji Salih Ibrahim. George Chaim Levi. Sassoon Nissim Sadik. Sami Jonathan Bassoon. Mun'im Rachmat Allah. Rashed Ismael Baglan. Mohammed El-Amine El-Fikri. Dr. Abd El-Latif Mohi El-Din Wassif. Mohammed Ahmed El-Bayati, a pilot. Dr. Albert Sassoon Shem-Tov.

Most of the accused came into contact with the main suspect (Yehuda Taggar) and gave him information that damaged Iraq, while rendering political services to Israel. Most of the suspects claimed their innocence and said the contacts were in good faith since they were peace-loving individuals. The investigating judge took their pleas and decided to refer their cases to the Supreme Court.

Report of the Investigator

We found in possession of the accused Salhoon the names and addresses of the following persons:

- Dr. Abd El-Latif Mohi El-Din Wassif. His practice is in Beit El-Anj Building, on El-Rasheed Street or in the clinic on El-Amine Street.
- Dr. Albert Sassoon Shem-Tov. It is he who recommended Dr. Abd El-Latif Mohi El-Din Wassif, because the latter wanted peace with Israel.
- Ernest Smith, a British citizen employed by the Full Way Brothers Company.
- Albert Elias who is married to Paula Vilenska (released for lack of evidence).
- Reuven Bitat.
- Ephraim Abed.
- Faisal El-Hujja (released for lack of evidence).
- Hussein Jamil.
- District officer Mendley.
- Ahmad Ajja Mohammed.

TEN

Accusations against Ben-Porat

Long after the Baghdad trials, in the Israeli town of Or Yehuda, Mordechai Ben-Porat and a number of Israeli establishment activists of Iraqi origin proposed to build a memorial to honor the two men who died on the gallows (Yosef Basri and Shalom Salih Shalom). The funding of the memorial would be provided by the Defense Ministry, the Jewish Agency and the town of Or Yehuda whose mayor was none other than Mordechai Ben-Porat himself. A space for the statue was reserved in the center of the town for this purpose.

Early in 1964, a bid to design the statue was open, and on March 15, 1964, various offers were received. It was Bid #13 of artist Shimson Merhab, an Iraqi immigrant, that won the competition. Once the resolution was passed, the necessary funds were released to build the memorial.

It was decided that the unveiling of the memorial would take place on June 15, 1966. A festive ceremony was also planned. Numerous officials, heads of institutions and the Iraqi Jewry were invited. The anticipation of this event jogged the memory of many Iraqi Jewish immigrants – the period of their immigration to Israel and the bombs that scared them out of Iraq. The closer to the date of the ceremony, the more intense were the debates. Many demanded that the government establish a judicial commission to investigate the events in Baghdad and the role played by Israeli agents, especially Ben-Porat.

Several reports and letters on this matter piled up on the desk of Shalom Cohen, an Iraqi immigrant who was the editor-in-chief of *Ha'olam Haze*. The first issue of the Israeli weekly that dealt with this subject appeared on April 20, 1966. The report shocked the Israeli public. Other journals also investigated and activists among Iraqi Jews summoned their courage to express their opinion on the events that took place in Iraq before their exodus. Reports bearing titles such as "The Violent Zionism" appeared in the press. On the eve of the unveiling, tension was high, and many expected the ceremony to turn into a demonstration against Ben-Porat and the entire Israeli government ,

On June 8, 1966, the daily newspaper *Maanv* published a letter written by Kaddouri Al-Waya, a resident of Or Yehuda, a senior employee of the health insurance organization Kupat Holim, and an active member of Mapai. This letter brought the subject to a head and pressed Mordechai Ben- Porat against the wall. He had to say something. He promised to expose the entire affair at the ceremony.

The ceremony took place on the evening of June 15, 1966 in downtown Or Yehuda. Numerous journalists and thousands of Iraqi Jews came to the rally hoping to hear the whole truth about the affair. Several days earlier, Ben-Porat had a meeting with Ben-Gurion and announced

afterward that he would disclose everything he knew about the affair. On a different occasion, Ben-Porat said Defense Minister David Ben-Gurion had ordered an investigation and that a copy of the findings was sent to him. Again, he said he would reveal the truth. Furthermore, he announced repeatedly that he would sue anyone who would claim that Israelis or Jews were responsible for the Baghdad bombings. But he said he would only sue important people, such as Sapir, and not *Ha'olarn Haze*.

Of the thousands of people who gathered in the town's central square, mostly Iraqi Jews living in Or Yehuda, were also reporters, photographers and Iraqi Jewish public figures in Israel. Seated on the stage was the panel: Shlomo Hillel, Yoav Goral, Yehuda Taggar, Kadish Luz of the Jewish Agency, and of course Mordechai Ben-Porat. The public had an opportunity to chat with several important figures among Iraqi Jews and heard their version of what they called "Ben-Gurion's first blunder." The second blunder was the Lavon affair, and the third was the sinking near the shores of Morocco of the Egoz, a small boat that was carrying Moroccan Jewish children to Israel in January 1961.

Later, *Ha'olam Haze* editors restated their claims and repeated what the Iraqi community leaders had said. It was expected that Ben-Porat would sue the magazine, but the Mapai Center probably advised him not do so. The secret service that was at that time serving the Mapai government may have forwarded to him some of the facts found by *Ha'olarn Haze*.

In early 1971, the Black Panthers appeared in Israel. Their tumultuous demonstrations shocked Israel. Many of its leaders and founders were Iraqi Jews, such as Shalom Cohen, Koshavi Shemesh and Naeim Giladi. We were privy to information pertaining to the Baghdad bombings as well as other affairs (Morocco and Egypt). On November 9, 1972, the Panthers' official organ, *The Black Panther,* published a report under the byline of Koshavi Shemesh, which was a complete reprint of what *Ha'olarn Haze* had reported in June-April 1966. We had hoped that Ben-Porat would sue us, and through a trial, we expected that the truth behind the bombings of Baghdad would be told – that the responses to hundreds of questions would be finally given. Shalom Cohen who was a Knesset member at that time had even prepared the ground for an eventual lawsuit. But to our regret, neither Ben-Porat nor Ben-Gurion sued us. Not only we were not sued, but also we did not even receive threats.

In 1977, the Sephardic Federation in Jerusalem, which deals with the affairs of oriental Jews, published in its monthly journal *Be'maaracha* an interview with Baruch Nadel, one of the most prominent reporters of *Yediot Aharonot*. His name at birth was *Baruch Oren*. He once belonged to the Stern Gang, but he later turned away from politics and became a reporter for *Ha'olam Haze*. His column titled "Huchistan" focused primarily on corruption in the city of Haifa under Mayor Aba Hushi. His reports were exhaustive and reliable. They helped uncover many corruption scandals in the port city. In the early seventies, Nadel conducted a research on the underground economy in Israel. His report was submitted to the General Secretary of the Labor Federation Histadrut and its summary was published in *Ha`olarn Haze*. Nadel received an award from the leadership of the Black Panthers for uncovering the truth about the immigration of Yemeni Jews, as well as the rampant ethnic and cultural discrimination in Israel.

Nadel also investigated the circumstances of the immigration of Iraqi Jews and published a few short articles. It was following these articles that the editors of *Be'maaracha* interviewed him. The interview was published in the April 1977 issue (# 185), under the title "Social Integration in Israel is an Illusion." The article stated:

> ... As far as the question of rescuing the Jews of the Middle East, there was always an agreement between the Zionists and the Arab leaders: "Give us their soul and keep their property!" But this agreement did not work in Iraq. The Jews lived well in Iraq and did not want to leave. It was then that Israeli agents hurled bombs at Jewish institutions in order to cause panic among the Jews and bring about the departure of nearly all of them from Iraq in the span of six months...

Mordechai Ben-Porat finally made a mistake in August 1977, when he hired attorney Micha Caspi and sued Baruch Nadel for libel. He requested half a million Israeli pounds in damages. In such cases, there is a provision in Israeli law under which the defendant may submit a number of questions to the plaintiff. The case went before Judge Zamir. Nadel submitted 365 questions. When Ben-Porat read the questions, he was so outraged, he complained they were humiliating and insulting. On February 6, 1978, during the court proceedings the judge invalidated many of the questions. Later, the case was transferred to Judge Ben-Dor who invited the opposing counsels. On July 8, 1979, he proposed the following compromise:

> 1. Baruch Nadel did not have the entire facts straight when he gave the interview.
> 2. The Babylonian (Iraqi) Jewry was praised for immigrating to Israel out of love for it and for Zionism.
> 3. The work done by Israeli immigration agents in Iraq was outstanding.

It is worth noting that Baruch Nadel (formerly known as Baruch Oren) was about to immigrate to the United States, and would have been unable to leave Israel while the case was pending. This put him as well as the editors of *Yediot Aharonot* under pressure. He ended up accepting the compromise proposed by Judge Ben-Dor. Unfortunately the deal did not allow Nadel's report, arguments or accusations to be discussed.

In 1981, Ben-Porat became Cabinet Minister. After the 1982 invasion of Lebanon by the Israeli army, Ben-Porat set out to "find new homes" for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. In fact, his intention was to carry out the same plan of dispersing the refugees and turning their training camps into dust.

On the eve of the 1984 elections, Ben-Porat did all he could to dispel the bad publicity that was cast on him. He even gave a television interview, at which his friend Yehuda Taggar appeared. In its issue of November 23, 1983, *Ha'olam Haze* printed again the past reports on the Baghdad bombings to counterbalance Ben-Porat's statements on television. Knesset member, former General Mattityahu (Matti) Peled called for an investigation.

In a letter to the editor of *Ha'aretz* (November 25, 1983) and in response to Peled's initiative, Ben-Porat made a promise. He promised that Peled's grievances would be addressed at a forthcoming meeting to be held on December 8, 1983, in honor of all those who ran the illegal immigration network in Iraq. Many people went to the meeting hoping to hear the answers to Peled's questions, but Ben-Porat talked about everything except the bombings *(Ha'olam Haze*, December 14, 1983).

If Ben-Porat was innocent and if all the charges against him were false, why then did he back off ? Why did he not sue *Ha'olam Haze*, which

accused him specifically for being responsible for the bombings in Baghdad ?

Another question that arises is why did he promise to divulge the affair but then renege on his promise ?

Our team looked for all the sources where Ben-Porat expressed his opinion on this subject in order to discredit him. After a long search, we got a break. Prior to the 1966 ceremony commemorating those who died in the gallows, Ben-Porat had issued, at the expense of Or Yehuda's Information Office, a binder in which he attempted to defend himself from the accusations leveled against him. The binder was enclosed with the report on the activities of the committee for the memorial. In addition to the report of the committee and the details of the bid, it included some of the statements of the men who were executed (Yosef Basri and Shalom Salih Shalom) as well as Ben-Porat's stance regarding the bombings. Below are the claims that Ben-Porat made in his binder. We will address each of Ben-Porat's claims.

BEN-PORAT'S CLAIM #1:
Bombs on the Streets of Baghdad

When the first bombing occurred on April 8, 1950, this writer (Mordechai Ben-Porat) reported to his superiors:

> Yesterday, three youths threw a bomb at a café on Abu Nuwwas Street. Four Jews were injured, one critically. There had been provocations in various areas of Baghdad involving rock throwing ... It is difficult to draw conclusions from these events. We have begun to make contacts with members of the community and we have asked them for their views on how to react. In our opinion, if these incidents recur, passive resistance should begin immediately by training youths in face-to-face combat, and to react at all times without the use of weapons. This may enhance the prestige of the Jews and compel the Iraqi government to maintain internal security which it desires so much on the eve of the signing of a treaty with Great Britain."

Following another one of my reports which described the plight of the Jews who had lost their citizenship and who are awaiting their turn to fly away, the head of the Immigration Institute at the time, Mr. Moshe Karmil pleaded in a letter dated October 25, 1950 to the responsible institutions:

> The limitation on immigration from Babylon is a problem replete with dangers. There is an exceptional necessity to increase the quota at once. The solution must not be delayed, lest it is too late.

It is difficult to follow Ben-Porat's thinking process and to figure out why he referred to his own report here. As for training youths for face-to-face combat, the fact is, members of Ha'shura had long been receiving such training.

As for Moshe Karmil's letter of October 25, 1950, which was a response to another report by Ben-Porat, it is impossible to figure out what Ben-Porat is trying to say. He details what is in Karmil's letter, but he does not divulge the contents of the "other report" that prompted Karmil's letter.

Another question arises: by not disclosing the contents of the "other report," does Ben-Porat fear to reveal information that would incriminate

him? A small group of reporters went to pay a visit to the mayor of Or Yehuda in order to know what was in the "other report," but his secretary told us the mayor was out, and to come the next day. When we returned, the mayor had not yet arrived at his office. Two days later, I went to see him alone. I was told that he was talking to the city commissioner, and to please wait.

Then a clerk came and asked me my name and the nature of my visit. I responded that I was Naeim Giladi of *Ha'olam Haze,* and that I wished to speak with the mayor. Two minutes later, the clerk came back and told me point blank: "The mayor is not in his office!" A week later, I ran into Ben-Porat at the headquarters of the Histadrut Labor Federation. A musician of Iraqi origin accompanied him. I popped the question to him. He said with a chuckle: "No comment!"

BEN-PORAT'S CLAIM #2:

The Eyewitnesses

On January 14th, 1951, at 7 PM, a bomb was hurled into the open yard of the Masouda Shem- Tov Synagogue. This was where the immigrants would gather before going to the airport. At that time, there were several hundred immigrants, and among them many members of Ha'halutz. An Arab threw the bomb across the street from the synagogue from the porch of a house where an Arab family lived. The bomb disconnected electrical lines and led to the death by electrocution of an eleven-and-a-half year-old boy and to the injuries of twenty-five people. Two of the injured men died, and a third one who was seriously injured said he saw an Arab wearing the army uniform who hurled the bomb. In order to record his testimony, it was necessary to bring a magistrate to him. But no magistrate wanted to come to the scene. Seven other youths and I went to the hospital immediately and donated blood to prolong the life of the injured man. Meanwhile, some of the dignitaries of the community were pressing the magistrate to record the testimony, as they also wanted to have the attacker arrested. The magistrate came to the hospital the following day, half an hour after the injured man died. Had the testimony been given, it would have changed the course of the police investigation and prevented it from accusing Jews as those who threw the bombs.

Problems of Visibility

Let us examine Ben-Porat's argument in light of the situation that prevailed at the moment of the attack. The attack occurred at 7:15 PM on January 14, 1951, which corresponds to the 7th of Shevat 5711. At that part of the month, the moon is still a crescent and its light is weak. Furthermore, even a steady moonlight would not break through the thick clouds of mid4anuary, which in Baghdad is the apogee of winter, with rain, cold weather and thick clouds.

Soldier in Uniform

Iraqi army soldiers wore winter uniforms identical to those worn by British soldiers. These uniforms could also be purchased in the open market in Baghdad. As a matter of fact the Shashas, a Jewish family that specialized in making shirts and pajamas also resold such uniforms after they had bought them wholesale in public auctions. The uniforms were used as cheap winter clothes by many Baghdad laborers. Since such

apparel was readily available, it cannot be concluded that it was a soldier who tossed the grenade.

Military Grenades

The Iraqi army instituted a strict rule with respect to all weapons and ammunition. An officer who trained new recruits to throw grenades was required to return the pins to the armory or be subject to court martial for loss of military equipment. This rule was in effect during the war in Palestine, and Iraq did not change its policy afterwards, for fear that subversive groups would steal them and use them against the government. Even if there was a soldier who wanted to attack Jews, he would not have been able to find a grenade.

The Darkness

In January, the sun sets at 5: IS PM. At 7 PM it is completely dark, and it is difficult to distinguish clearly between military uniforms and regular civilian clothes. Moreover, when the grenade was thrown, it hit an electrical cable and cut it. The broken cable electrocuted a Jewish teenager and killed him instantly.

Immediately, there was a blackout in the entire sector. Only then did the grenade explode. This is explained in a book published by the Israeli Defense Ministry, *Road in the Desert* by Yosef Me'ir *(Me-'ever la-midbar*, Ma'arakhot, 1973). In addition to the natural darkness, any person who has experienced the sudden transition from light to total darkness knows there is a temporary blindness that lasts a few seconds. How then is it possible that the injured man (whom Ben-Porat quotes) could see the man who threw the grenade and his uniform?

500 Deaf and Mutes

At the time of the attack, there were over 500 people in and around the synagogue. If the injured man saw the attacker and the incoming projectile, he would have instinctively yelled, even if he **t**hought it was a stone. None of those who were present told the police during the investigation about the soldier in uniform or any other person. None of these details was corroborated by the testimony of the witnesses who were at the synagogue, including those who were injured.

The Investigator's Files

In the police files on the investigation of the attack on the Masouda Shem-Tov Synagogue, there is nothing whatsoever regarding witnesses who gave a description of the attacker.

The Magistrate

Ben-Porat claims that no magistrate came to collect the injured man's testimony before it was too late. This claim is absurd, since a police file was immediately opened on the case. Nothing could have been simpler than to telephone the police station in charge of the investigation and ask for a detective to come and record the testimony of a "dying witness." If there was real need of a magistrate, it would have been easy to get one, if a reward was involved. Ben-Porat is certainly no stranger to bribery, since it was the way he often dealt with police and military officers. (See *Road in the*

Desert, op. cit.) He knew it would have been possible to mobilize a magistrate at any time of the day or the night for a mere 50 Dinars, and he often talked about it. (See also *To the Gallows,* by Yehuda Atlas *('Ad amud ha-teliyah,* Yerushalayim, 1972).

Since anything was possible at that time when the amount of money was right, Ben-Porat's claim is weak and baseless. His allegation that a magistrate came two hours after the man died is just as ridiculous. In those days, any Baghdad magistrate would have come immediately because he would know that when Jews called, money would be made. If a magistrate arrived thirty minutes after the man died, it is because the magistrate was called in very late-if he was called at all when the man was alive.

BEN-PORAT'S CLAIM #3:

The Men of El-istiklal

> Yaakov Azachi who is now a dentist in (the Israeli town of) B'nai Brak tells about the bombs that had been placed on the roof of the building Suk El-Amana in Baghdad where he once had his practice. The first floor was used as a market, and the second floor was for craftsmen. His practice was in one of these spaces, and he was the only Jew in the mall; all the rest were Arabs.
>
> One morning, Azachi recounts, a youth who was working as an apprentice for a neighboring tailor said there were bombs on the roof of the building. The dentist's son climbed on the roof and confirmed that bombs were indeed there. Azachi informed an Arab dignitary of his friends, who in turn called the police. The police investigated and eventually arrested all those who placed the bombs there. They were members of the El-Istiklal party. Most members of this opposition party had just returned from the war front with Israel.

I have never met Dr. Azachi whom Ben-Porat quotes, but there is something obviously missing in his statement. There is no mention of when Azachi's son saw the items on the roof of the Suk El-Amana building. Also, the age of his son is not mentioned, nor it is clear if the son was knowledgeable about this type of ammunition and whether he could distinguish between a mortar shell and the jacket of an artillery shell or an aerial bomb. It is inconceivable that a soldier who fought in the Palestine war and who knows the penalty he incurs by stealing military supplies or ammunition would take such a risk.

Even if such a soldier existed who possessed ammunition or bombs, it makes no sense that he would expose them on a rooftop to be seen by anyone. The building in question is much lower than adjacent buildings, and during summer monthsl Baghdad residents usually sleep on rooftops.

It is reasonable to assume that what was left on the rooftop of Suk El-Amana were empty shells or mortar capsules that had been brought by soldiers from the war in Palestine as souvenirs. As for the Baghdad police, it must be mentioned that not one single man was trained as a demolition expert. Policemen were usually trained to use rifles or machine guns. If these were indeed bombs, no policeman would have gone. Instead, the army would have been called, since it had demolition experts. The police force had a few explosive experts, but they were trained to blow up obstacles or bunkers, not to handle or defuse them.

Until the attack on the Café Dar El-Beyda on April 8, 1950, there was no record in Iraq's history of terrorist acts using hand grenades or explosives. There had been one isolated case when a bomb was. placed under a train carrying British troops to avenge the deaths of soldiers killed at Falluja by British airplanes on May 19, 1941. But since then, the successive regimes have been extremely strict in guarding army or police armories, even in. times of war. Furthermore, some soldiers returning from the front in Palestine (in the Jenine area) have claimed they were to receive no new rounds of ammunition unless they returned the spent jackets of previous rounds. If this is true for bullets, then it must also be true for mortar shells or hand grenades.

Azachi has claimed that the police came and (easily) took the bombs. If this was true, then they must have been the empty jackets of mortar or artillery shells. These events took place a year after the war in Palestine was over, and some soldiers could have brought back such items as mementos or to impress their friends and families, as do soldiers anywhere else. It is not uncommon to see them used as lamp stands in living rooms all over the world.

As for the positions of Hizb El-Istiklal, the point Ben-Porat makes shows his total ignorance of Iraqi political parties. This is not a surprise. Mordechai Ben-Porat was born Murad Kissas in Baghdad in 1923. He left for Palestine in 1945, a year before numerous changes occurred in Iraq politics. Among other things, the Iraqi authorities allowed political parties to form and to publish their own organs.

The El-Istiklal party was among the first parties to publish a journal that labeled the Jews as the fifth column and demanded their deportation from Iraq. It was a jingoistic party with strong fascist leanings. It was supported and financed by the Iraqi feudalists who opposed any kind of agrarian reform, as well as the British who saw it as a barrier to communism.

The following is a sample from the speeches of members of the El-Istiklal party during the deliberations in the Iraqi Parliament concerning the law that allowed the Jews to live in Iraq if they renounced Iraqi citizenship (March 5-10, 1950):

> I propose that the pending law include clauses that would solve all our problems and get us rid of this cancer (i.e., the Jews) (M.P. Faik El-Samarai).
>
> In my opinion, all Jews should be deported from Iraq, with the exception of the old or the very young (M.P. Ismael Ghanim).

These quotes have been taken from the minutes of the Iraqi Parliament 1949-50 (pages 142- 144). Furthermore, the organ of the El-Istiklal party, Liwa El-Istiklal published the following after the law of denaturalization was enacted:

> The Jews are a foreign element in this land, whether by their feelings or by their conduct (#1221, March 11, 1950).

Given what has been said above, the El-Istiklal party did not object to the departure of the Jews from Iraq as Ben-Porat claims. In fact it favored such a development. One can even say without being extreme that the positions of this party fitted exactly Ben-Porat's designs in Iraq. There is no basis whatsoever to assign the blame to Hizb El-Istiklal on the bombings of the Jewish institutions in Iraq. Therefore Ben-Porat's claims must be dismissed as out of hand.

BEN-PORAT'S CLAIM #4:

> The Iraqi government wants all the Jews out and accelerates the rate Of immigration.

What Ben-Porat claims is correct, but he omits to present the context in which this decision was made, thus giving it a totally different meaning. On February 2, 1951, the second session of the Iraqi cabinet convened and discussed the slow pace of Jewish emigration from Iraq, despite the accelerated rate of registration of those who wished to give up their Iraqi citizenship. This was in response to the demands of the airline that was carrying the Jews to Israel. The Near East Air Transport Company complained to the Prime minister that routing the flights though Cyprus caused delays and slowed the pace of immigration. Hence it was resolved at the cabinet session as follows:

> Clause #5 of the flight agreement states that the planes departing from Baghdad may not land in a country that has no diplomatic relations with Iraq. Since this clause is slowing the pace of the emigration of the Jews, and since the government wishes to speed up the exodus as much as possible, and since it is in the interest of the public to see to it that denaturalized Jews leave the country as soon as possible, the Iraqi cabinet has decided to approve the proposal under which the Near East Air Transport Company could pursue its flights without being obligated to take its passengers to a pre-approved destination as long as its planes stop over in Nicosia, Cyprus on their return to Iraq.

On March 19, 1951, about a week after this cabinet decision, a bomb was thrown at the American Cultural Center in Baghdad. Immediately after the attack, the Iraqi cabinet debated the slow pace of emigration. The cabinet was on the verge of signing a treaty that would put Iraq under Britain's dominion. Circumstances dictated quiet and serenity in the country, not bombs. During the talks between Ronald Barnett, the manager of the Near East Air Transport Company (a disguised Israeli airline), Shlomo Hillel and Prime Minister Nouri El-Said, the latter proposed to accelerate the pace of immigration, and he did so for various reasons.

The first reason was his desire to get rid as soon as possible of communist Jews, many of whom held strong views against the British and stirred the youth into protests against the government. At that time, jails and prisons were packed with young Jews, mostly communists. The second reason was financial. Nouri El-Said's son, Sabah El-Said, was the owner of an airline and he wanted this company to profit from flying Jews out of Iraq. Sabah's airline was in dire straits, and generated a meager income with its limited destinations, (See *Road in the Desert,* by Yosef Me'ir, Me-'ever la- midbar, Malarakhot, 1973).

There is no connection between the attack on the American Cultural Center and the resolution of the government to liberalize the flights of Jewish immigrants. However, a similarity must be noted between this attack and one perpetrated against the American Cultural Center in Cairo at the same time. In both locations, leaflets written in a communist and anti-American style were handed out to camouflage the true identity of those who committed the crime. The saboteurs, all Mossad agents, were captured in Cairo. To cover its tracks, the Israeli Prime Minister of the time,

Moshe Sharett immediately began a major campaign of defamation against this "blood libel" (Lavon Affair).

BEN-PORAT'S CLAIM # 5:

The Iraqi police Captures Taggar and Ben-Porat

On May 22, 1951, Israel received a message announcing that Taggar and Ben-Porat had disappeared and that the Iraqi Police detained seven workers of the immigration System. Nevertheless, and despite the fact that most of those responsible for emigration were under detention, On the night of June 5, 1951, an explosive charge was tossed between the front of Stanley Shashua's building and the Al-Rafidayn Bank and caused partial damage to the front of the building.

With this claim, Ben-Porat is trying to persuade his accusers that he was locked up at the time of the bombing, and therefore, it had to be someone else who did it. Indeed a bomb exploded on the night of June 9, 1951 near the Stanley Shashua and Bank El-Rafidayn, and not on the night of June 5, 1951, as Ben-Porat claims.

A bomb did explode on the night of June 5, 1951, but it was at a different site, between the offices of the *Baghdad Times* and the department store Mayo. What matters here is not the location, but the date and how it relates to the time when Ben-Porat was under detention.

Ben-Porat (a.k.a. Murad Kissas, Nissim Moshe, Zaki Habib ...) had previously been arrested twice in Basra due to his carelessness, or more precisely because of his excessive irresponsibility, his obstinacy, his boundless arrogance, and his failure to consider the long-term consequences. According to Yosef Me'ir (code-named "Yehoshafat") who was one of the pillars of the Zionist underground in Iraq, Ben-Porat was arrested on June 29, 1950, after he was found at the house of a Movement member when the police came to conduct a search (*Road in the Desert,* op. cit.). He was released on July 5, 1950.

At that time a drunken motorcyclist ran into Ben-Porat's car. He was so aggravated, he beat up the man. A military officer who was passing by stopped him. The dispute escalated between Ben-Porat and the officer, who became offended and took him to a police station where a complaint was lodged against him. Ben-Porat was released after posting bail, pending the trial.

On May 22, 1951, Ben-Porat was arrested again in the department store Orosdi-Back, with Yehuda Taggar. Ben-Porat was released on bail on May 28. The next day he showed up in court for the motorcycle case. The judge decided to detain him, but another judge interceded and ordered his release. But he escaped on June 2nd, just as he was going to be released.

A Brief Comparison

It is worth comparing the dates of Ben-Porat's detention with the dates of the attacks. Lo and behold! When he was detained, no bomb went off, not even an explosive charge. It can even be stated that the attacks occurred only when he was at large. As for the explosive charge that blew up near the Stanley Shashua Company, Ben-Porat claims that it occurred on the night of June 5, 1951, although it really occurred on the night of June 9, 1951.

From June 5-9, 1951, Ben-Porat was at large. On June 2nd, he escaped from the police guards who were escorting him through Suk El-Shorja, a crowded marketplace. After June 9th, he sought refuge with

friends until he was smuggled out of the country on June 16th, and departed to Israel. Hence there is no ground for his claim. From the course of events and looking at the dates of his incarceration, it seems plausible that Ben-Porat was able to carry out the attacks.

It is interesting to note that even though thousands of Jews had already left Iraq, legally or otherwise, once Ben-Porat departed and after the police rounded up his associates, the bombing ceased.

Timetable of the Explosions

After reviewing the large number of books dealing with this topic, one finds that many authors are mistaken about the timing of the explosions. In her book, *Prophets in Babylon: Jews in the Arab World* (London-Boston: Faber and Faber, 1980), Marion Woolfson states that the first bomb exploded at the American Cultural Center of Baghdad on March 19, 1950. All books published in Israel by the Defense Ministry or commissioned by the Jewish Agency agree on the timing of the first bomb. Following is a chronology of the attacks:

First attack: April 8, 1950. A hand grenade was hurled on a crowd of Jews who were celebrating Passover at Café Dar El-Beyda.

Second attack: June 3, 1950. A grenade was thrown from a speeding car in ElBatawin neighborhood in Baghdad.

Third attack: January 14, 1951. A hand grenade was tossed at the Masouda ShemTov Synagogue.

Fourth attack: March 19, 1951. A hand grenade exploded in the American Cultural Center of Baghdad.

Fifth attack: May 9-10, 1951. A hand grenade exploded near the offices of the Beit Lawee Company.

Sixth attack: June 5-6, 1951. A charge exploded between the offices of the *Baghdad Times* and the Mayo department store.

Seventh attack: June 9-10, 1951. A charge exploded between the Stanley Shashua Agency and Bank Al-Rafidayn.

The seventh attack was the final one. The police recovered shrapnel after the explosion and compared it to the explosive materials found in the caches of the Zionist movement, after Shalom Salih Shalom was arrested. The explosives were identical. The same was found with respect to the detonator that the police found during the investigation.

Timing of the attacks and the rate of Jewish immigration refutes completely the libel that it was Jews who tossed the bombs in order to speed up the exodus. If not the Jews, who tossed the bombs in Baghdad? Ben-Porat claims that:

1. Agents of Hizb El-Istiklal, a party that opposed the departure of Jews and that caused trouble to blacken Nouri El-Said's name, tossed the bombs. After the police failed to find those who were responsible, it picked on the Jews, and especially those of the underground movement.

2. Since Nouri El-Said wanted to prove he was a patriot in the wake of the resolution to allow the Jews to emigrate from Iraq, he wanted to distract the public opinion by holding trials against the Jews. Therefore he decided to pick on the members of the underground during the last stages of *Operation Ezra and Nehemia*. Nouri El-Said managed to capture the attention of the media and the public opinion for more than eight months. Yosef Basri and Shalom Salih, may they rest in peace, were the victims of intrigues and maneuvers that were supposed to serve the needs of political struggles in Iraq.

Again Ben-Porat accused the members of El-Istiklal of being behind the attacks against Jewish institutions in Baghdad, as he claimed before (claim #3). But again, he is misleading.

1. Ben-Porat's claim that El-Istiklal wanted to blacken Nouri El-Said's name is absurd. El-Istiklal strongly backed Nouri El-Said policies. Together, they stood to preserve the interests of the rich landowners and opposed the leftists.
2. When the military government was formed early in 1948 after the tumultuous demonstrations against the Portsmouth Pact and abolition of all parties, Hizb El-Istiklal was the only party authorized by the government because it was in agreement with the line traced by Salih jabr and Nouri El-Said.
3. The claim that Nouri El-Said held trials against the Jews to prove his patriotism after he allowed Iraqi Jews to leave the country is completely baseless. Nouri El-Said was himself in favor of a military alliance with Israel and Turkey (see Samuel Segev's *The Iranian Triangle*, New York: The Free Press, 1988).

Nouri El-Said was not hostile to Jews. Many of his friends were Jewish and his son was living in an Israeli kibbutz with his Jewish wife. He himself claimed to be the scion of a Rumanian Jewess who was given to his grandfather Loulou Aga by the Turks after the Iranians killed his wife. Nouri El-Said's greatest fear was the rise in strength of the communists (see Hayyim J. Cohen's *Pe'ilut ha- Tsiyonit be-'Irak, Zionist Activities in Iraq*, Jerusalem: Ha-Sifriyah ha-Tsiyonit,1969) and his decision to push the Jews out of Iraq was raised a number of times with British representatives (see Shlomo Hillel's *Ruah Kadim*, Tel Aviv: Eastern Wind, Misrad ha'bitahon, 1985).

Immediately after the law of denaturalization was passed, Nouri El-Said and Ronald Barnett, the manager of the Near East Air Transport Company discussed the possibility of accelerating the exodus of Jews by flying them directly to Israel. He then pressed the Iraqi cabinet to allow the planes of the Near East Air Transport Company to fly its planes directly from Baghdad to Lod Airport in Israel, thus avoiding the costly and time-consuming layover in Cyprus. He even proposed his son's (Sabah) airline to help in the transfer of Jews.

Moreover, Nouri El-Said suggested to King Abdullah of Jordan to allow Iraqi army trucks to carry Jews across Jordan to Israel (see *Road in the Desert*, op. cit.). In his research (pp. 192-222), Pr. Sudai alluded to a secret agreement between Nouri El-Said's cabinet and Israel regarding the exchange of population or "transfer" of Iraqi Jews and their property in exchange for the Palestinian refugees and their property.

When U.S. American Secretary of State John Foster Dulles visited Baghdad in May 1953, Nouri El-Said expressed to him that he was ready to

absorb a certain number of refugees or accept compensation payment and border modifications. If this could be arranged, Nouri El-Said said the Arab World would then lift its economic boycott against Israel and would be ready to discuss UN Resolution 181 of November 29, 1947, and establish normal relations with Israel (see Najdat Fathi Safwat's *Al-Iraq fi mudhakkirat al-diblumasiyin al-ajanib (Iraq in the Memoirs of Foreign Diplomats)*, Saida: Al-Maktabah al-Asriyah, 1969].

The claim that Shalom Salih Shalom and Yosef Basri were victims of the intrigues of the Iraqi regime is totally preposterous. All of the accused were members of Ha'shura and were given fair trials. They were even given civilian trials, which is extraordinary, under the circumstances. If this had happened in Israel, its "democratic" government would surely have tried them in a military court.

The trials of Shalom Salih Shalom and Yosef Bash and their associates lasted three months and were transcribed on hundreds of pages. Every one of the accused was given the opportunity to hire a defense lawyer and speak for themselves. It is true that some of the people arrested were given lengthy sentences while others were acquitted. It is also true that some were tortured.

Israel also tortures its prisoners. It is not uncommon in Israel that accused people are denied any contact with their families. It is sometimes the case of Jewish convicts, such as was the case of Mordechai (Motke) Kedar. In Baghdad, the trials were about bomb attacks, and involved the discovery of eleven caches in which the police found 33 submachine guns, 97 cartridges for submachine guns, 436 hand British-made grenades, 25,000 rounds of ammunition for submachine guns and tens of thousands of rounds for regular handguns.

They also found 32 knives and daggers, chemicals to manufacture Molotov cocktails, explosives charges as well as hundreds of detonators and delay switches. This enormous amount of weapons and ammunition was found in eleven caches. Reliable sources have estimated there were at least thirty such caches in Baghdad alone.

The trials lasted for 26 lengthy sessions. The court acquitted Salim Khabaza (Yosef's brother) and his mother. Three young women were sentenced to five months in jail, but were released for time served. Fuad Salih, Abraham Karkouli, Shaur Yehezkel, Abraham Yehezkel, Yaakov Shamia, Ezra Ramin, Fuad Nathan and Yitzhak Sitti were each given five years in prison. Robert Henry Rodney was given five years and Yehuda Taggar was given a life sentence. Shalom Salih Shalom and Yosef Basri were sentenced to death.

One can only wonder what an Israeli military court would have done if Arabs were found in possession of such a quantity of weapons, ammunition and military maps, let alone if a convict confessed and revealed the names of his associates, as in Rodney's case.

Another Claim by Ben-Porat

In addition to the claims that Ben-Porat advanced in his binder in order to repel the accusations against him and which he denies flat out, he voiced yet another claim. But he did not dare to include it in his binder. He claimed to *Yediot Aharonot* (April 1966) that the confessions of the accused were completely false because they were obtained under torture. In this regard, it is only sufficient to hear what a number of public figures from the Iraqi community have to say. It so happens that these people are members and activists in the Mapai party to which Ben-Porat also belongs.

One of these dignitaries, Kaddouri El-Waya of Or Yehuda, wrote a letter to Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion and the justice Minister, asking them to open an authoritative investigation on the trials of Baghdad. He wrote:

> In my view the trial was not staged. For instance, weapons were discovered in the house of the Khabaza family. At first, Salim Khabaza and his mother were arrested. But they were later released because they were able to convince the court that it was Yosef Khabaza who had hid the weapons before he escaped to Israel. In this instance, even if weapons have been found in their house, the court decided to acquit them of all charges. They are now in Israel.
>
> Sassoon Sadik was one of those who was questioned. He had lived and served in Palestine before 1948 for seven years before returning to his native Iraq. The police released him after questioning him, even though Yosef Basri was captured in his house. Had the trial been staged, he would have been certainly convicted, if only because he lived in Israel for a long time. The trial was given wide coverage in the local and foreign press and the transcripts were published daily. After examining the evidence, hearing the witnesses and lengthy deliberation, the court determined that the bomb attacks had been the work of agents of the Zionist movement in Iraq.
>
> Do we have *a priori* to show hostility to the findings of the Iraqi court ? Do we have to dismiss them out of hand just because an Iraqi said it? It seems to me that the findings of the court call for an investigation that the government should conduct and establish:
>
> - Who threw the bombs?
> - Who gave the orders to throw them?
> - What were the motives?

Kaddouri El-Waya's stance on the Iraqi trial was shared and supported by all the Jewish attorneys who emigrated from Iraq. They also agree that the Iraqi court reached the right conclusion, i.e., that the bombs were indeed thrown by members of the Zionist underground. The attorneys objected to the methods used by the Iraqi police, but they all felt the court proceedings were conducted with due process and were not staged *(Ha'olarn Haze*, May 25, 1966).

Kaddouri El-Waya was a respected member of the Or Yehuda town council, a Mapai activist and a vibrant member of the Iraqi immigrant community. Although he was a fierce opponent of his fellow party member Ben-Porat, he reviewed what had happened in Baghdad, and refuted Ben-Porat's claims in his letter to Prime Minister and the justice Minister. He closed it by requesting that the government form a judicial commission of inquiry in order to check the matter in an authoritative manner. *Ha'olam Haze* published excerpts of El-Waya's letter, but the alternative press published it in full. His letter is a precious document, and leaves nothing else to be said. Here are other excerpts:

> The events that shook Iraq in 1951 need a thorough investigation and study. Many of those who took part in these events are still among us, and it would be easy to question them and find out what really happened. To avoid misunderstandings, I wish to say at the outset that I do not intend (heaven forbid!) to desecrate the memory of those who have been executed in Baghdad. I obviously express my disgust with the death penalty that was inflicted on them. On the other hand, the severe penalties

they received do not mean that the facts that led to their conviction had been falsified and that their confessions were false.

A very serious charge has been leveled against Iraqi courts. To the best of my knowledge and understanding, the court attempted to exhaust the matter in full. Mr. Mordechai Ben-Porat who had been sent by the Israeli government to direct the Movement in Iraq has argued in *Yediot Aharonot* that the guilty verdict was based on false confessions given under torture and therefore cannot be trusted.

Being well acquainted with the Iraqi Courts, and having personally known the judges who conducted the trials, I disagree completely with Mr. Ben-Porat's version of events. In my opinion the trials were not staged at all ... what needs to be scrutinized is how the affairs of the Movement were conducted. Were they run carelessly, even with criminal negligence to the cost of human lives?

Why was Taggar sent to Baghdad?

Yehuda Taggar came to Iraq to replace Mordechai Ben-Porat. As was noted, when he entered the Orosdi-Back department store, a Palestinian refugee who had known him in Palestine exposed Taggar accidentally. After he was identified, Taggar managed to distract the refugee and left the store without trouble. Nevertheless, Mr. Taggar returned to the same store a week later with Mordechai Ben-Porat. This time, his luck ran out and both men were caught and arrested.

Ben-Porat was lucky and was released on bail (again this is a testimony that not everything is rotten and corrupt in Iraq's legal system). He then had the opportunity to flee from Iraq.

After Taggar's arrest, some time passed before the other members of theMovement were also arrested. I want to emphasize that they were not arrested immediately. Why were they not warned? Why were they not directed to leave Iraq, or at least keep a low profile until things had calmed down? Why were their names not kept secret? Why did everyone know everything about the whole network? Had they been forewarned, perhaps things would have ended differently. Such a negligent comment led to the exposure of the entire network and requires a thorough investigation. Why was it decided to replace Ben-Porat ? Why was Taggar sent to Iraq ?

A conflict broke out between the local movement members and Ben-Porat. The movement members argue that Ben-Porat and those who aided him dominated everyone else. They claimed that Ben-Porat had turned into a dictator who did not take into account other people's views. The late Yehezkel Shem-Tov who was the head of the Jewish community in Iraq sent an emissary to Israel and asked that Ben-Porat be replaced. He argued that the Ben-Porat and his gang were damaging immigration efforts, the immigrants themselves, and were going to further endanger the lives of the Jews who chose to stay in Iraq.

In the period in question, there were a total of seven bomb attacks, all in sites where Jews congregated. One of them was tossed at the American Cultural Center in Baghdad. The bombs were thrown every time Jews stopped signing up to renounce their citizenship in order to emigrate, and after each bombing, the drive to register accelerated again. The bombs that were thrown

increased the panic of Iraqi Jews, since they were told that Jew-haters had tossed the bombs. The most serious case was the bombing outside of the Masouda Shem-Tov Synagogue, where a Jewish boy was killed. Salim Kaddouri who now lives in Israel suffered injury to an eye. This act is particularly serious since at that synagogue, there were, at any given day, no less than 2,000 Jews at a time waiting to immigrate. It was only a stroke of luck that a much bigger catastrophe did not happen.

Mr. Ben-Porat stated to *Yediot Aharonot* that the recent whispers and accusations leveled against him and his colleagues as being responsible for the bombings were instigated for political reasons.

I hereby declare, as an Iraqi Jew who is familiar with Iraqi Jewry and active in it, that these charges surfaced immediately after the trial in Iraq, and that Mr. Ben-Porat and his colleagues were publicly accused in Israel by a number of Israeli Jews as early as 1955, when Ben-Porat presented himself to become mayor of Or Yehuda. The statements and declarations of Mordechai Ben-Porat and Yehuda Taggar are completely at odds with the findings of the Iraqi court. These revelations must not be overlooked.

The matter requires an investigation. Today no one is at risk any more and all those who were involved have immigrated in Israel. It is out of respect and appreciation for the men who went to the gallows as a result of assignments they were ordered to carry out that a thorough study must be completed by a responsible and objective body. *(Ha'olam Haze*, #1496, May 25, 1966)

Someone Had to Act

One man who did not hide behind vague innuendos is Shimon Mendes, in an article for *Ha'aretz* titled, "The immigration from Iraq and the Israeli Government." Mendes is an expert in the history of Iraq who is writing a doctoral dissertation at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. He wrote:

The Israeli government had the opportunity to rescue some 130,000 Jews and to improve the demographic situation of the State of Israel. Iraqi Jewry faced a leadership crisis in those days. Whether they did not know what to do or whether they did not wish to risk assuming responsibility for any initiative, the leaders of the community remained silent.

Someone had to act, and they took the right action at the right time. For only an operation such as Esek-Bish (botched affair, fiasco) would have brought them to Israel.

Anyone who knows anything about politics in general, and who follows political developments in Israel in particular, has heard about Esek-Bish for a long time. But to some, seeing it as a botched affair would be unfair to Ben-Gurion and would desecrate the memory of Shalom Salih and Yosef Basri... *(Ha'olam Haze*, #1500).

The two opposing views are again presented. Which one is correct? The Israeli government must give a clear answer. At least for the two whose memorial will be unveiled in two weeks. *(Haolam Haze*, April 27, 1966 and May 25, 1966)

Another Example

One day in July 1952, six months after the execution of Yosef Basri and Shalom Salih Shalom, the daily newspaper *Davar* (then organ of Mapai and today organ of the Labor Party) published an article written by Abraham Shpadron (Sharon) as follows:

> I shall not be ashamed to confess that, if I had power as I have the will, I would select a score of efficient young men, intelligent, decent, devoted to our ideal and burning with the desire to help redeem Jews, and I would send them to the countries where Jews are absorbed in sinful self- satisfaction. The task of these young men would be to disguise themselves into non-Jews, and, acting according to brutal Zionism, plague these Jews with anti-Semitic labels, such as *"Bloody Jews!"* or *"Jews, go to Palestine!"* and similar intimacies. I can vouch that the results, in terms of considerable immigration to Israel from these countries would be ten thousand times larger than the results brought by thousands of emissaries who have been preaching to deaf ears for decades." *(Davar,* July 11, 1952).

Who Wants the Book to Disappear?

In addition to my desire to find out as much as possible about my friend Yosef Basri who was executed, I became very curious about the disappearance of a certain book.

In 1955, several lawyers and I began to look for avenues to secure the rights to the property left behind in Iraq by departing Jews. I went to numerous counsels looking for advice on how to go about it. In the course of my consultations, the subject of the trials in Baghdad often came up. It is also then that I first heard of a book that described the trials. I heard that it had been written in Arabic and its English translation was soon to be published in London. I waited for two years, but the book was never published.

In November 1980, while I was traveling in the United States, I attempted to find the book in Arabic. A veteran Israeli of American origin told me that American public libraries have every book ever written. I looked in all the libraries that carried Arabic books, but it was nowhere to be found.

At last, in July 1982, a friend in Washington, D.C. located the book for me. Four months later when I went to America on a lecture tour with Knesset member Charlie Bitton, I could finally lay my hands and my eyes on the precious book. As soon as I started to flip through the pages, I immediately understood why it was so rare to find, even in Iraq.

The book is titled *Samm Al-Lafaa Al-Sahioniya (The Venom of the Zionist Viper)*. It was published in 1953 by Al-Jamiah Printers in Baghdad and written by 'Abd Al-Jabbar Fahmi, a police officer who was assigned to investigate the case. The book is a diary of sorts, of the court sessions on the sabotage and espionage network cases.

In more than 500 pages, the author describes the confessions of the suspects to the police, their statements in court, the evidence, testimony of the witnesses, the charge sheets and the claim of the defense. The book is illustrated with the photos of the suspects as they were recreating their acts in the courtroom, in presence of the leaders of the Jewish community. Unfortunately, due to the poor quality of the paper, I could not make photocopies of the crumbling pages. All I could do was read the book and copy by hand what seemed interesting or desirable.

After I finished reading the book, it became obvious to me that only the Israeli government would have an interest in seeing the book disappear and in keeping the Israeli public from finding out about its contents. After all, in the past 37 years, only the Israeli government opposed a judicial commission of inquiry that would bring this affair to light.

The Court Dossier

At the time I was examining *The Venom of the Zionist Viper,* a long-time friend in the United States offered to help me. He had heard about my research on the Baghdad trials and the difficulties in obtaining resourceful information. One of his in-laws, an American citizen, was about to fly to Saudi Arabia where he worked for an oil company. On his way, he was planning to stop over for a few days in Baghdad. I asked him to collect as much Iraqi official documents on the trials as he could.

I was aware that there were separate files on each of the three different cases (bombings, espionage and illegal organizing). But I did not know how many files there were for each separate case. The traveler agreed to make photocopies of the three files. Not wanting to arouse suspicion, he sought the assistance of an influential official. When he was granted access to the archives where the files were stored, he was told they had been badly damaged by fire during the coup that brought Abd El-Karim Kassim to power in 1958. He photocopied whatever he could, sometimes portions of pages and mailed the outcome (hundreds of pages) to his relative in America who handed them to me. What I was able to extract from the pile of the court documents has helped me in writing this book.

Evidence in Writing: More on the Missing Book

Previously we have noted that in the days preceding the trials, the Iraqi government and Zionist movement shared a common goal: ousting the Jews from Iraq. But the Iraqi government was not willing to let this happen if it would cause the collapse of the country's economy. Despite the nauseating atmosphere it created around the Iraqi Jews, the government still maintained excellent relations with Jewish owners of capital. The latter formed a class that shared many interests with the rulers. In fact, the government even took action to reverse its prior policy regarding the ban on delivering licenses of import/export to Jewish merchants, and lifted other obstacles.

Hence, it can be concluded that the government could not have opted for bombings in order to achieve its goals of seeing the Jews depart. It knew that panic would lead to a mass departure of Jews, and with them, the flight of capital and other resources. All this would cause the collapse of the country's economy, as it so happened.

However, the Zionist movement in Iraq and the Israeli agents who ran it were prepared to do anything in order to achieve their goals. Their objective was to bring about the exodus of all Iraqi Jews before March 8, 1951, at any cost. This stance of the Zionist movement was known to anyone who had any connection with its leaders, and was an open secret in those years. The motto was: *"TO LEAVE ON TIME, AT ANY COST."*

Many books have been written about the history of the Zionist movement in Iraq, and some have discussed Iraqi Jewry in depth. They generally treated the question of immigration either as a primary or a secondary issue, but they all overlooked the bombings and their perpetrators. Yet it is possible to dig into what little has been written to find

the bitter reason for this. In his book *Pe'ilut ha-Tsiyonit be-1rak (The Zionist Activities in Iraq,* Jerusalem: Ha-Sifriyah ha-Tsiyonit, 1969), Hayyim J. Cohen wrote in page 199:

> This chapter is being written sketchily, as it is impossible to discuss the matter in detail without assuming the risk of bringing up things one had better keep silent about.

To what risk is he alluding? After all, in 1959, ten years before the book was published, all the actors in this affair were in Israel. No response is given to this question except a thundering silence. Hayyim J. Cohen actually confirms this in page 201:

> On the streets, the prevailing view was that the Haganah is the one who tossed the bombs, so as to blacken Iraq's name.

Cohen further confirms that after each bombing, the number of those departing Iraq grew in a dramatic fashion:

> The Iraqi government's version holds that those who tossed the bombs were Jews who were members of the underground wishing to blacken Iraq's image and to pressure the Jews to rush and give up their citizenship, and in particular, to pressure the Israeli government to speed up the evacuation of the Jews from Iraq. The evidence this researcher possesses at this time does not make it possible to determine with accuracy who tossed the bombs and why, but it can be said that after January 14, 1951 (Masouda Shem-Tov attack), the Jews did rush to give up their citizenship.

Cohen in effect confirms the correlation between the bombing and the rise of the number of applications to emigrate from Iraq. As for his lack of sufficient material to make a determination, his posture makes no sense.

The Jewish Agency funded the publication of Cohen's book. Although it surely wished to put the blame of the bombing on Iraqi Moslems, this institution apparently had an interest in seeing the book published; otherwise it would not have invested money in it. At Srifin near Ramleh (Israel), the Jewish Agency owns gigantic facilities that store all the archives relating to immigration from each country, including Iraq. Surely Cohen would have found enough resources, had he looked in those archives. It is fair to assume that a talented historian such as Hayyirn J. Cohen did find plenty of material on these events, but "higher ups" must have given him the signal that the material is classified.

Yosef Me'ir also approached the subject. In page 205 of a book published by the Israeli Ministry of Defense, *Me-'ever la-midbar: ha-mahteret ha-halutsit be-Ir'ak (A Road in the Desert*, Ma'arakhot, Tel Aviv, 1973), he wrote:

> After the grenade was tossed, the pace of emigration from Iraq increased. The Near East Air Transport Company, an Israeli airline disguised as a European airline, which had flown the Jews of Yemen two years earlier (Magic Carpet operation) under the name Trans Ocean Air Transport, strove to increase the pace of departures to 600-700 individuals every day.

Yosef Me'ir was himself a leader of the Movement in Iraq which he left in late 1949. "Yehoshafat" (his code name) is a broad-minded intellectual

who now is employed by the Israeli Ministry of Defense. He wrote another book on the immigration of Jews from Yemen. He was awarded the Israel Prize for his book on the Jews of Iraq, in which he wrote:

> As the exit permission was to expire on March 9, 1951, there were rumors that there would be no extension.

The connection between the fear that the deadline would not be extended and the bombing, is crystal clear and leaves no further comment.

Can a Jew Toss a Bomb at Another Jew?

Yitzhak Bar-Moshe dealt with the exodus of Jews from Iraq in his book, *The Departure from Iraq: Memories 1945-1950*. The Sephardic Committee in Jerusalem published this book in Hebrew *(Yetsi'at 'Irak: Zikhronot mi-shenot 1945-1950,* Yerushalayim: Sefaradiyot shel ha-Histadrut ha- Tsiyonit ha-olamit, 1977). It was also published in Arabic *(Al-Khuruj min al-Iraq: Dhikrayat 1945-1950,* Al-Quds: Manshurat Majlis al-Taifah al-Safaradiyah, 1975). Bar-Moshe, who knew a great deal about Zionist activities in Iraq, expresses in his book the feeling of most Iraqi Jews, namely that the bomb attacks were the work of Zionist agents.

He approaches the subject carefully, and apparently he does not want to blacken the name of his colleagues. In page 333 of the Hebrew publication, he expresses his thoughts in a dialogue between two Jews who are debating the bombings:

> — Who then tossed it (the bomb)?
>
> — Maybe it was members of the Movement themselves?
>
> — Are you out of your mind? Why would they do a thing like that?
>
> — Because the registrations to emigrate died down. They want to scare the Jews to hurry up and register. Who else could it be? Only members of the Movement could. They prod us constantly to leave Iraq, no less than anti-Semites or the agents of the government. They are in a bad fix after the scandals about the registration to emigrate. I cannot believe that a Jew could toss a bomb at another Jew. They have a job to do, and they must do it. They probably felt they were going to fail.

Bar-Moshe is an admirable man. I often met him in the editorial offices of the Arabic newspaper *El-Anba'* in Jerusalem. I regularlv read the columns of this excellent reporter. He truly is the "voice" of Iraqi Jewry.

He raised a very pertinent question: "Can a Jew toss a bomb at another Jew?" I must admit that before these events, I was equally naïve until I found out what happened to the ship *Patria* and that the men of Shaul Avi-Gur (Haganah) had sunk her. The sinking resulted in the deaths of two hundred and fifty innocent Jews. This tragedy has been described in detail by Bracha Habas in his book, *The Gate Breakers* (New York: T. Yoseloff, 1963).

If this story was not sufficient to convince me that indeed a Jew could toss a bomb at another Jew, I only needed to read the interview that General Mordechai Zipori, the former Israeli Minister of Communications gave to *Yediot Aharonot* on October 4, 1985. He said among other things:

Zipori: In my 28 years of service, I learned that the army is capable of dragging any government, even the strongest and the wisest to do things it does not intend to do. You simply have no way of coping with this.

Question: Has this ever happened in Israel other than during the war in Lebanon?

Zipori: Oh yes! if you go over Israel's military history, you would surely find out that it was once proposed that one of our planes be painted in the colors of Egypt, and then sent to bomb Israel. This would have made it look as if the Egyptians did it. All sorts of ideas and surely there were actions too ...

This was not said by a "leftist" or by a PLO sympathizer. It was said by a former minister, a man who is one of the leaders in the Herut party and a reserve general in the IDF. Given what this man has said, there is no doubt that Jews could have tossed bombs on other Jews. The man who was in charge of the bombings of the *Patria* was the late Shaul Avi-Gur, the man who directed the immigration of Jews from Iraq.

Testimony of a High-Ranking CIA Man

Ropes of Sand: Americas Failure in the Middle East (New York: W. W. Norton) was published in 1980. It was written by Wilbur Crane Eveland, a senior officer in the American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Eveland was an expert on the peoples of the Middle East before he passed away on January 2, 1990, after a bout with cancer.

At age 17, he joined the Marines and was quickly promoted to do intelligence work. During World War II, he was active in several European countries. After the war, he returned to the United States and studied Arabic. In 1950 he became a military attaché at the American embassy in Baghdad. In 1953, he started a career in the CIA.

Ropes of Sand is highly critical of U.S. policies in the Middle East and received much publicity because the CIA opposed its publication with all its power. After numerous trials, the courts finally allowed the publication of this book in which is mentioned the trial. After I moved to New York City, I searched in vain for this book in bookstores and public libraries. In 1984, 1 managed to find the author's address. He graciously sent me a copy of his book with the promise to visit me on his next trip to New York.

We met in 1988. After a long talk about Baghdad in 1950, we got to the issue nearest to my heart: the trial of Baghdad and the way it was conducted.

The following is a summary of the statements of Wilbur Crane Eveland to me:

> The Iraqis invited all embassies to send observers to the trials. They also invited the leaders of the Baghdad Jewish community. The Iraqis, that is, the police and the court, presented to us the weapons they found in the secret stockpiles. The truth is that I as well as the other embassy officials were stunned by the quantity and quality of the weapons and by the storage system. There was enough to equip an entire infantry battalion with many submachine guns, ammunition, handguns and hand grenades.
>
> In court, I believe that during the third session (at any rate not the first one), the defense lawyers of the two main defendants argued that their confessions had been obtained by coercion through torture and as such should be dismissed. The Presiding judge (it was by the way a civilian court), after consulting with his colleagues, said he would like to ask the accused a number of questions. He first asked the younger man (Shalom Salih Shalom) a few questions, all of which the defendant answered affirmatively.

The second defendant (Yosef Basri), a lawyer, also replied that he had known that the black-gray matter was explosives. His partner Yosef (Khabaza) warned him not to touch it because it was dangerous. When he was asked why his car was found near the sites of the bombings, he began to stutter. In answering the questions of the Presiding judge, both the lawyer and the young man said they knew Yosef Khabaza and he had told them that it was he who had carried out all the acts of sabotage under the orders of Zaki Habib (an alias of Mordechai Ben-Porat).

The lawyer replied: "True, they probably carried out acts of sabotage in order to push the Jews of Iraq to go to Israel." But when asked why and for what purpose his name was found in the list of Ha'shura, the branch of the Haganah in Baghdad, he began to stutter again and argued that it was probably Yosef (Khabaza) who recommended him ... But he said he did not take any part in any operation, and he was not a Zionist.

The judge asked him: "You are an attorney and you know the law. As an Iraqi citizen who saw explosives and met a man who claimed that he had carried out acts of sabotage, why did you not notify the proper authorities?" Again, the defendant began to stutter.

The judge asked him: "Why did they find traces of explosives in your bag? Why were you hiding behind the closet if you had nothing to hide?" More stuttering. It was clear that the defendant was facing the gallows.

Question: "Did the defendants look as if they were tortured?"

Eveland: "Certainly! They were very broken ... Surely they had been badly beaten ... doesn't the Israeli police torture and beat the people it suspects?"

Question: "Were you present at all the trial sessions?"

Eveland: "No, only to some of them. I was there also at the espionage trial. I remember one piece of evidence presented by the state was the report of the experts who had examined the letters of an Arabic typewriter that was found in one of the synagogues, along with maps and the lists of Ha'shura members. The type of letters were found to match exactly those on a number of leaflets that had been found at the sites of the bombings, such as the leaflets found after the attack on the American Cultural Center. In my opinion, the trial went on like any other trial of its kind. For an Arab state, it can be said that it was a very fair trial."

In page 49 of his book, Eveland notes that the Iraqi police provided the American embassy with evidence that the bombings of the synagogues and the American Cultural Center and the leaflets found in the sites of the attacks had all been the work of a Zionist underground organization. But most of the world had already believed reports that it was the work of Arab terrorists who wanted to scare the Jews out of Iraq. The Zionists "happened to come and rescue" these Jews. By the same token, they increased the Jewish population of the State of Israel. At the same time Wilbur Eveland Crane published *Ropes of Sand,* another book, *Prophets in Babylon: Jews in the Arab World* (London-Boston: Faber and Faber, 1980) appeared in England and promptly caused a storm among Zionist Jews. Its author, Marion Wolfson spared no time. Given the sources on which she drew in writing her book, it seemed that she was well acquainted with Israel and other Middle Eastern countries. In her book, she covers the history of the Jews in a number of Arab countries and states clearly her sources.

Concerning the pogrom that took place in Baghdad in 1941 *(El-Farhud),* she points out that the British government adamantly refused to release the documents relating to these events. Wolfson also covered the Lavon Affair on which she gives exclusive inside information. On the attacks on Jewish institutions in Baghdad, Wolfson quotes, among other things, the testimony of a number of Iraqi Jews, two of whom she interviewed in Baghdad:

> Some might say that the testimony of Reuven Naji Hakak was dictated by his presence in the city of Baghdad and that he was under pressure from the state institutions. But the same cannot be said about the third Iraqi Jew (Ezra Cohen) who now lives in Ramat Gan, Israel ...

Ezra Cohen is an accountant whom I have personally known. With his wife, we went to welcome him at Lod airport when he was released from Iraqi prison, immediately after Abd El-Karim's coup in July 1958.

Who is to Blame in the Bombings of Baghdad?

In the previous chapter, we presented the claims of Mordechai Ben-Porat (born Murad Kissas and also known as Nissim Moshe and Zaki Habib), according to his own written account. Each claim was analyzed in the light of the situation that prevailed at the time. We showed that all of his claims proved groundless and collapsed like a house of cards.

We also showed that the El-Istiklal party was not to blame in the attacks and that no state or group sponsored by the Iraqi government had interest in carrying them out.

The question that arises is: who had interest in carrying out these attacks? What was their purpose and who commissioned them? In order to answer these questions, one must examine whether there was a connection between these attacks and their timing on the one hand, and the pace of emigration on the other hand.

> 1. The attacks were carried out in places frequented by the Jews, but at times when few or no Jews were present. The conclusion that can be drawn from this fact is that those who committed the attacks intended to scare the Jews and not cause mass killings.
> 2. The time span between the first attack (April 8, 1950) and the second significant one Uanuary 14, 1951) is very long compared to the span between the second attack and the third (March 19th, 1951). The time spans are not coincidental but rather are integrally connected with the pace of Jewish registration to emigrate from Iraq (see chronology of bombings).

The first attack (April 8, 1950) was carried out immediately after the law of denaturalization and was meant to reinforce the leaflets distributed by the Zionist movement in Iraq. These leaflets were distributed promptly after the attack on the Café Dar El-Beyda and called upon the Jews to leave Babylon. They gave the date and time of day (4 PM) and the warning:

> (To) All the Jews of the Tribe of Zion Living in Babylon:
>
> For the second time in the history of the Diaspora, we have an opportunity to leave. We encourage you to hurry and leave. Today, the Jews are in a new era of the history of the Diaspora. The time has come for all Jews to register immediately. Today we have the freedom to leave the hardship of the Diaspora and go to Israel. Youth of Israel, leave the darkness of the Diaspora. You are being given an opportunity to leave. Jews, Israel is your country. Leave Babylon!

In late 1950, the deadline of the law of denaturalization was approaching (March 9, 1951) and there were rumors that the Iraqi government would not extend it. The leaders of the Movement and immigration emissaries in Iraq came to realize that the number of Jews who signed up to emigrate did not exceed one-third of the Jewish population in Iraq.

It is then that the third grenade was tossed at the gate of the Masouda Shem-Tov Synagogue, causing several deaths and a large number of injuries. It appeared that those who tossed the grenade did not intend to inflict so many casualties and that the grenade accidentally hit a utility pole and bounced towards the crowd.

With the fourth attack (March 19, 1951) on the American Cultural Center of Baghdad, there is no obvious connection to the pace of registration to emigration. But this attack and its timing appear to be connected to a very different matter. In the years 1948-50, Israel expelled more than 750,000 Palestinian Arabs who left behind thousands of dunums (1 dunum= 4 acres) of fertile land. In 1950, Israel passed the Absentee Property Law that allowed the expropriation of these lands, to turn them over to the Custodian of Absentee Property, which was in effect an expropriation for the benefit of the Israeli government.

The matter was published in the world media and then, on March 10, 1951, when the Iraqi Parliament convened to extend the law allowing the Jews to emigrate, it passed a concomitant law to freeze the property of all citizens who gave up their Iraqi citizenship. The Israeli government promptly responded with a number of actions, among them a statement that the property of the Jews would be brought up in the debate about the property of the Palestinian Arabs who had been expelled by Israel.

Israel also complained to Western powers about discrimination against Jews, torture and anti- Semitism in Iraq. The U.S. Embassy in Baghdad was directed to investigate the Israeli complaint. The Iraqi government responded that these claims were groundless and invited the representatives of the Western powers to see the truth for themselves, that it would be glad to offer assistance. Not long after, on March 19, 1951, the bomb exploded in the American Cultural Center in Baghdad. It appeared as a threat from Iraqis to the American embassy not to proceed with its investigation.

In the fifth attack (night of May 9-10, 1951), the bomb with a delay switch near the window of the Beit Lawee Company was definitely meant to rush those who hesitated to register to leave Iraq. After a law that froze the assets of the Jews who decided to emigrate was enacted, many Jews decided to stay. The number of those emigrating did not rise, despite the relentless propaganda of the Zionist activists.

On May 22, 1951, Yehuda Taggar and Nissim Moshe (Mordechai Ben-Porat) were arrested. Following their arrest, other Movement activists were rounded up. Ben-Porat, who was released on bail was re-arrested in connection with a traffic accident. He was on his way to be released when he escaped from his police escort in the busy marketplace of El-Shurja.

Those who have meditated on the sixth attack (night of June 5-6, 1951), near the Stanley Shashua Company, have concluded that the leaders of the Zionist movement wanted to show the Iraqi authorities that those arrested had nothing to do with the previous bombings, since they were all in jail when this last bombing occurred.

Most Iraqis in the Zionist movement who immigrated to Israel unanimously support these interpretations of the bomb attacks. The arrests, the investigation and the subsequent trials proved them right.

Shalom Salih Shalom was arrested after his name was given when Salim Mouallem testified. When he was interrogated, he said that it was Yosef Murad Khabaza who had placed the bomb on the night of June 5-6 1h near the Stanley Shashua Company. Shalom Salih Shalom also said that Khabaza confessed to him that he tossed the bombs on the Café Dar El-Beyda (April 8, 1950) and the Masouda Shem-Tov Synagogue (March 14, 1951), and that he placed bombs on the American Cultural Center (March 19, 1951) and near the Beit Lawee Company (May 9-10, 1951). Shalom also explained that Yosef Khabaza described to him his acts in detail, as well as his motives and aspirations. Khabaza also told him that the orders came from a man named "Habib." Until he testified, Shalom Salih was not aware of who Habib (Mordechai Ben-Porat) was, nor did the Iraqi police know. Shalom noted that Khabaza acted with the help of Yosef Basri and Salim Mouallem.

The testimony of Yosef Basri also confirms the purpose of the attacks, i.e., prodding the Jews to leave Iraq. Yosef Ibrahim Basri was indicted by Shalom Salih's testimony and his answers to the judge's questions revealed his dishonesty and insincerity. What were the explosives (that matched the explosive Khabaza used in the June 5-6th explosion) doing in Basri's bag? According to Basri's testimony, Khabaza wrapped the explosive device in newspaper and stashed it in Basri's bedroom. Khabaza warned Basri not to touch it, because it could explode. Why was Basri's automobile found near the site of the explosion? Why was there a cache in Basri's bedroom if he had nothing to hide? What was Basri's driver's license doing in a weapons cache? Why did Khabaza meet Basri on the night of the explosion and drive in Basri's car late that night when the explosion took place?

In Basri's testimony, Yosef Khabaza acted according to instructions from Habib (Mordechai Ben-Porat).

What Does Israel Want with Iraqi Jews?

In truth, the Zionist movement was not concerned with the welfare of Jews who were native of Islamic countries. It was the demographic superiority of the Arab majority in Palestine that made the Zionist leadership seek to tip the balance. In addition to the desire to increase the Jewish population of the State of Israel, there were other needs that made it necessary to increase immigration at all costs.

After the expulsion of more than 750,000 Palestinian Arabs, the expropriation of their lands and the destruction of more than 300 of their villages, Israel acquired millions of dunums of fertile land that awaited Jewish settlers and farmers. In 1952, the labor force that helped carry out the government projects consisted of 82% of the Jews of Middle Eastern origin that were housed in slums (*Maabarot*). The development of the agricultural infrastructure and rebuilding and expansion of the citrus industry were the most important of these projects. There was a systematic pattern of giving preference to the interests of the class that was already strong, namely the veteran Ashkenazi settlers. The Israeli government sent European immigrants to solid housing already built and the Jews from Islamic countries were sent to tent encampments, where they lived for several years.

Who Gave the Orders? Where There is Smoke, There is Fire ...

On April 8, 1950, a grenade was thrown on a crowd of Jews in the Café Dar El-Beyda and caused the deaths of four people. Outraged Iraqi Jews

accused the Zionist underground, the only organization that had interest in perpetrating this deed in order to scare the Jews to flee to Israel (see *Yetsiat Irak, The Departure from Iraq: Memories 1945-1950*, by Yitzhak Bar-Moshe, Yerushalayim, 1977).

Shalom Salih Shalom and Yosef Basri confessed it was their associate, Yosef Khabaza who committed the bombings under the orders of Habib. After the guilty verdict was announced in the trial, the Jews of Iraq who were already in Israel demanded that the Israeli government investigate the case. In January 1952, in the same week when Yosef Basri and Shalom Salih Shalom were hanged, a large demonstration of Iraqi Jews took place in Rehoboth, in Southern Israel, demanding (to no avail) that a commission investigate the bombings of Baghdad and determine who was really behind it.

The Israeli weekly *Ha'olam Haze* also urged the government to act on this matter. In its issue #1216, the editorial hinted indirectly at the case and called for an investigation. But on April 1, 1966, the story blew out of proportion with the publication of the letter that Kaddouri El-Waya sent to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Justice. The letter in which El-Waya requested an investigation was followed up with questions to the former Defense Minister, Pinhas Lavon. In his response, he wrote:

> When I was Minister of Defense, I heard something about this XXXXXXXXXX CENSORED XXXXXXXXXXX happened there in Iraq XXX XXXXXXXX CENSORED XXXXXXXXXXX I did not look into the matter, but a long time after the case that someone has labeled as the "Lavon Affair" (scandal in Egypt), during a discussion with some good friends, I heard about an inquiry into XXXXXXXXXXX CENSORED XXXXX XXX XXX but no judiciary investigative commission was formed and no judge dealt with the matter. When the Lavon Affair was discussed, I said that there were many "affairs" and I meant this affair and others as well." *(Ha'olam Haze*, #1496).

Even though they were heavily censored, Lavon's statements show clearly that the government of Israel and other government branches were involved.

But who actually plotted the bombings of Baghdad? On the one hand, Mordechai Ben-Porat claimed to *Yediot Aharonot* (April 1966) that the confessions were extracted under torture. On the other hand, Kaddouri El-Waya as well as Iraqi Jewish lawyers and the British Embassy in Baghdad insist that the trial was conducted properly and that the judgment rendered was legal and fit the crime.

Ha'o1am Haze published the first article on this subject in its issue #1494 and the headline on the cover was "The Scandal of Ben-Gurion." Ben-Gurion sent a letter to the editor in which he stated that he had nothing to do with this matter. If he was telling the truth, why did he not consent to initiate an investigation once the details were publicly known?

Since all these crimes took place during his administration, whether at his orders or without his knowledge, he did nothing to stop them. **Therefore the responsibility falls on David Ben-Gurion**.

Addendum

The public has become used to hearing Ben-Gurion's lies. Among other things, he said:

> We (Israel) did not expel any Arab inhabitants of Palestine. Rather, they left the country because they heeded the calls of the leaders of the Arab countries. They were told to leave for a short period and wait until the Arab forces had destroyed Israel before returning to their homes.

It became apparent that the Haganah conspired with the Stern Gang and Lehi for the purpose of committing massacres in Deir Yassin, Ramleh and Lydda. (See *History of the Haganah* and *The Rabin Memoirs*, by Yitzhak Rabin. Boston: Little, Brown, 1979).

When President Dwight D. Eisenhower decided to send his emissary, Eric Johnston to the Middle East in order to mediate the distribution of the water of the Jordan and Banya Rivers between Israel, Jordan and Syria, Ben-Gurion ordered Ariel Sharon to undertake the Kibyah massacre on September 14, 1953. Ben-Gurion wanted to greet Johnston with this event. After the international outrage following the massacre, Ben-Gurion said at the Knesset: "We categorically reject Johnston's recommendations (*Twentieth Century*, p. 221).

Concerning Ben-Gurion's claim that he did not know anything about the events in Baghdad until it was published in the media (see *Ha'olam Hazeh* #1494) we say that his statements are nothing but lies. We found a copy of an order bearing his signature that asks for the investigation of the case (To *Baghdad and Back: The Miraculous 2,000 Year Homecoming of the Iraqi Jews*, by Mordechai Ben Orat. NY: Gefen Publishing House, 1998). The head of the investigation committee who is one of the major pillars of the Mossad, had ordered the bombings.

Most witnesses believe strongly that those who were responsible for the explosions were members of the Zionist underground movements in Iraq. I have personally undertaken my own research concerning what was said in the different statements. One of the witnesses, Iddy Sofer, a pillar in the Zionist movement in Iraq, wrote the following statement:

> Yes, I repeat that the bombs were thrown by the hands of members of the Movement! In the beginning I had some doubts, but after the explosion at the American Cultural Center, my position increased in firmness.

About the Author

Naeim Giladi (Khalaschi) was born in Iraq to a family of farmers who grew dates and rice. Since early childhood he absorbed the rich Arabic culture which included prose and poetry.

After the massacre of Jews in Baghdad, which was organized by the British, he joined the underground Zionist movement. At the end of World War II he moved to southern Iran where his family owned farm land. There he engaged in the smuggling of Iraqi Jews via Iran to Israel. With his arrival in Israel he was faced with ethnic discrimination which he fought against and organized thousands of others to resist.

Giladi's crusade against Israeli ethnic discrimination angered the Israeli government and they retaliated by denying him and his family members any government jobs. Despite the economic hardship, Giladi did not give up. He continued his struggle for social equality and justice and called for an Arab/Israeli peace based on true understanding and recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.

He joined the newly founded Israeli Black Panthers movement and became its representative in the Executive Committee of the General Trade Union of the Histradrut. Giladi collected folk stories common to the Jews and Arabs which were published in Israeli newspapers and heard on the air waves of Kol-Israel. He also published articles in *Al-Hawadit*, a newspaper advocating Palestinian rights.

In 1982, after the massacre in the camps of Sabra and Shatila, Giladi left the state of Israel and came to the United States.

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